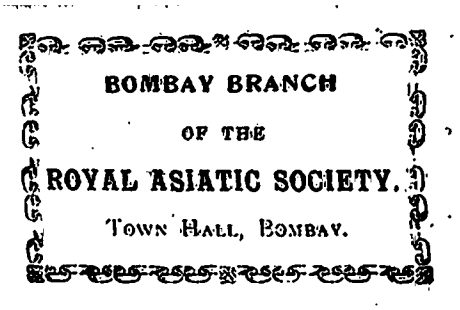
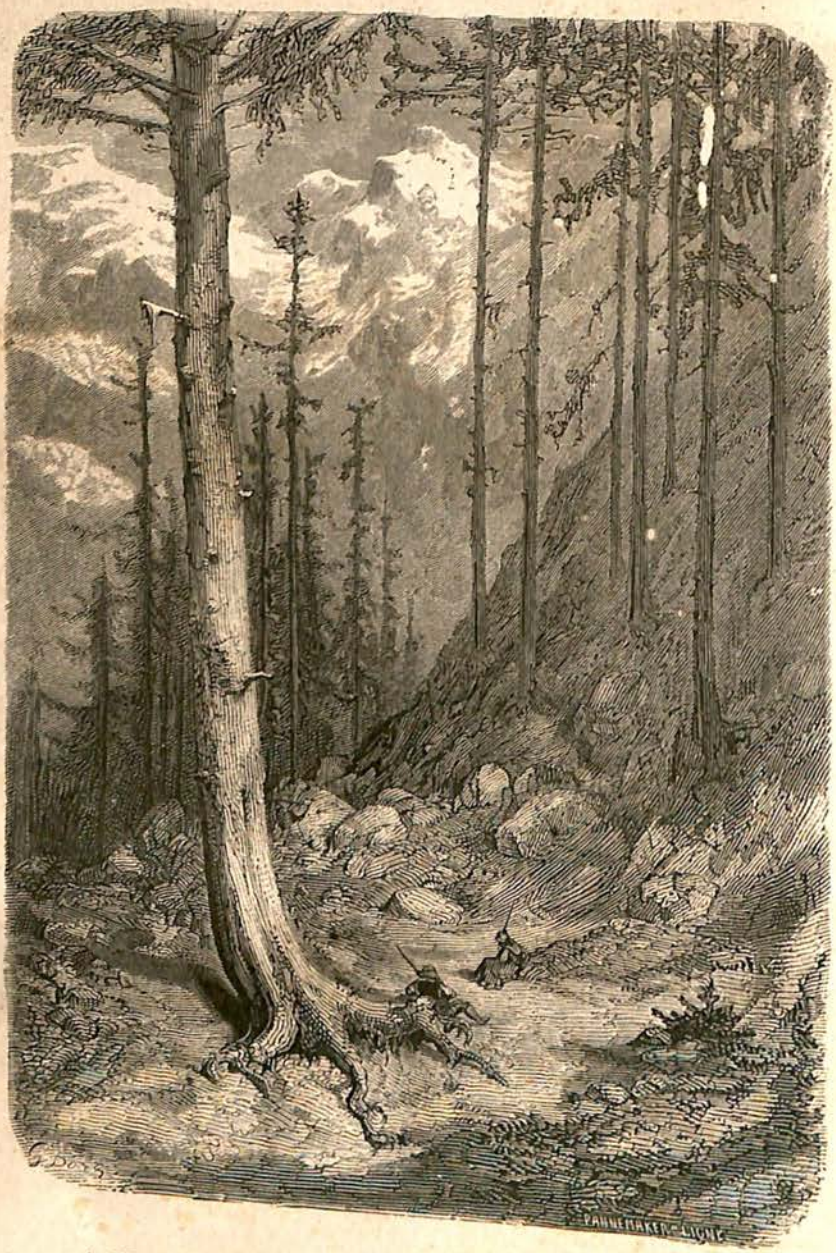
00058998

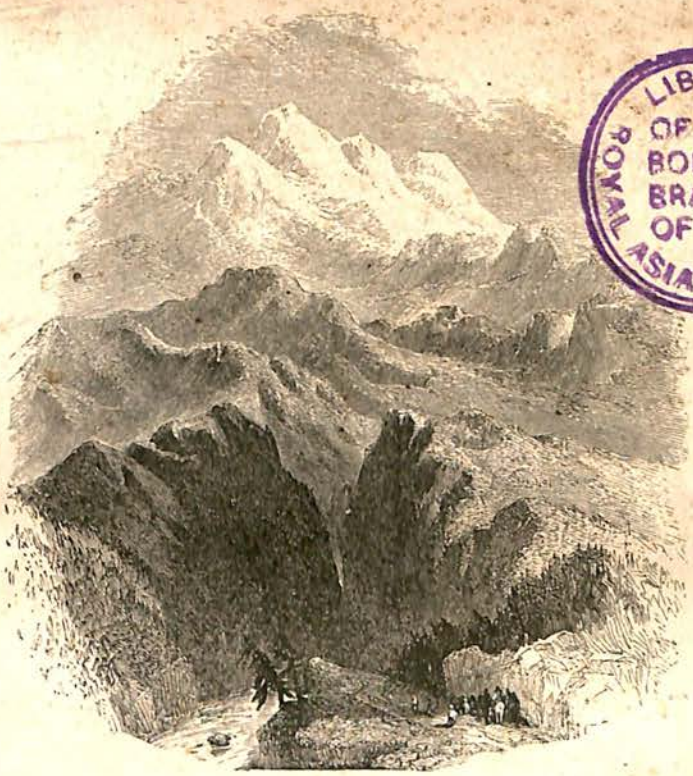


Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 02 July, 2018



A BREAK IN THE PINE FOREST, BY GUSTAVE DORÉ

THE PYRENEES



LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

Rx 6 19

BY

HENRY BLACKBURN

THE

PYRENEES:

A DESCRIPTION OF

Summer Life at French Watering Places.

BY

HENRY BLACKBURN,

AUTHOR OF 'TRAVELLING IN SPAIN IN THE PRESENT DAY,' ETC.

58998
a.C.

"Les Pyrénées ne sont que la bordure gracieuse d'un paysage riant et d'un ciel magnifique. Rien d'imposant ni de sévère; la beauté ici est sereine, et le plaisir est pur."—*Taine.*

WITH UPWARDS OF

One Hundred Illustrations by Gustave Doré,

AND A NEW MAP OF THE CENTRAL PYRENEES.

LONDON:

SAMPSON LOW, SON, AND MARSTON,

MILTON HOUSE, LUDGATE HILL.

1867.

The right of Translation is reserved.

914.489
Bla/Pyr
58998

LONDON: PRINTED BY W. CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET,
AND CHARING CROSS.

PREFACE.

In the present volume it is proposed to describe, in familiar language, the general aspect of the scenery and summer life in the Pyrenees, arranged in the form of a tour or visit to the most popular places. To do this as completely as possible, the Author has been permitted to introduce a few extracts from the work of a French writer on the same subject. They are generally given in French, for which most readers will probably be thankful.

M. Taine's remarks, independently of their humour and picturesque grace, have a peculiar value in these pages, in giving the reader an assurance that 'summer life in the Pyrenees' is not represented from a one-

sided point of view. In a few words introduced here and there, it will be seen that, whilst delighting in satirising his own countrymen, he thoroughly appreciated the beauties of nature, and believed in sunshine as much as any Briton. 'On a pris,' he says, 'l'amour de la vie avec l'amour de la lumière,' and sympathetically asks, 'Combien de fois, sous le ciel nébuleux du Nord, formons-nous un pareil désir?'

In illustration of the work, the publishers have been fortunate enough to obtain the drawings of an artist whose name is famous amongst us, and whose illustrations of Pyrenean scenery are already highly esteemed in France. They are one hundred and twenty in number, and will probably be found to give, as a whole, the most perfect picture of the mountains and valleys of the Pyrenees ever presented to the English public.

In the Map which accompanies this volume, the principal routes described have been laid down; but it may be as well to state, for the information of

those who are unacquainted with the country, that the district familiarly known as 'the Pyrenees,' comprises but a small part of that range of mountains which divides France and Spain.

Perhaps it is reserved for our own countrymen to explore further, and to give both in pen and pencil the result of their experiences at a future time.

PARIS, *May*, 1867.

CONTENTS.

		PAGE
CHAP. I.	—BORDEAUX—THE LANDES—DAX—ORTHEZ ..	1
„ II.	—PAU	23
„ III.	—VAL D'OSSAU—EAUX CHAUDES	42
„ IV.	—EAUX BONNES	79
„ V.	—CAUTERETS	115
„ VI.	—STORM	145
„ VII.	—VAL DE LUZ—GAVARNIE—BRÈCHE DE ROLAND	160
„ VIII.	—LUZ—BARÈGES—BAGNÈRES DE BIGORRE.. ..	193
„ IX.	—LUCHON	219
„ X.	—VAL DE LYS—LAC D'OO—PORT DE VENASQUE	249
„ XI.	—ST. BERTRAND DE COMMINGES—TOULOUSE—	281
„ XII.	—BIARRITZ—ST. JEAN DE LUZ—CONCLUSION ..	309

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

A BREAK IN THE PINE FOREST .. .. *Frontispiece.*
THE VAL D'OSSAU .. .. *Vignette*
MAP OF CENTRAL PYRENEES .. .. p. xvii

PAGE

CHAP. I.—The Gave 5
„ Shipping at Bordeaux 8
„ The Landes 9
„ „ 12
„ „ 13
„ Dax 16
„ „ 17
„ Orthez 20

CHAP. II.—View from Pau 24
„ The Château 27
„ The Park 31
„ Courtyard of the Château 33
„ General view of Pau 37

CHAP. III.—View in the Val d'Ossau 43
„ An Oasis 44
„ Inhabitants of the Val d'Ossau 45
„ Distant view of the Pic du Midi 46
„ View in the Val d'Ossau 51
„ A Sketch in Church 57
„ Route to Eaux Chaudes 63
„ „ „ 65

PAGE.

CHAP. III. (*continued*)

„ Environs of Eaux Chaudes 69
„ Valley above Gabas 73
„ The Blind Fiddler 75

CHAP. IV.—Mountains near Eaux Bonnes 80
„ The Pic de Ger, from Aas 82
„ Sunset on the Mountains 89
„ Clouds and Peaks 92
„ Invalids taking the waters 94
„ The German Band 95
„ 'En Queue' 96
„ A Cascade 98
„ The Cascade du Valentin 101
„ „ „ 104
„ „ „ 105
„ Above Eaux Bonnes 107
„ The Pic de Ger 108

CHAP. V.—A Summer's Day 113
„ Lourdes 117
„ The Val de Luz 118
„ „ 119
„ Cauterets 123
„ A Mountaineer 126
„ Cascade near the Pont d'Espagne 127
„ The Pont d'Espagne 131
„ The Lac de Gaube 135
„ A Dancing Bear 143

CHAP. VI.—Storm 148
„ The Battle of the Trees 150
„ The Gave after a Storm 153
„ A Mountain Wreck 155
„ The Pines 156
„ „ 158

PAGE

CHAP. VII.—The Gorge de Pierrefitte 161
„ St. Sauveur 164
„ A Bird's-eye View 166
„ Bridge at Scia 170
„ Gèdres 173
„ Chaos 175
„ „ 177
„ Cirque de Gavarnie 182
„ Brèche de Roland 184
„ Cirque de Gavarnie 185
„ Cascades 187
„ Ascent of the Pic de Bergons 190
„ Ascending and descending 191

CHAP. VIII.—Ancient Church of the Templars at Luz 193
„ Château near Luz 195
„ At Luz 197
„ The Gave, near Luz 198
„ View of the Gave. (Sunset) 199
„ Barèges 201
„ Summer Visitors 202
„ Winter Visitors 203
„ A Winter Scene 204
„ 'Un Ascension' 207
„ Pine Trees 209
„ The Mountains 212
„ The Woods above Bigorre 216

CHAP. IX.—Luchon 220
„ Environs of Luchon 223
„ Path leading to Super-Bagnères 229
„ A 'baigneur' 236
„ Dîner 238
„ The Parc 239
„ The Woods near Luchon 245

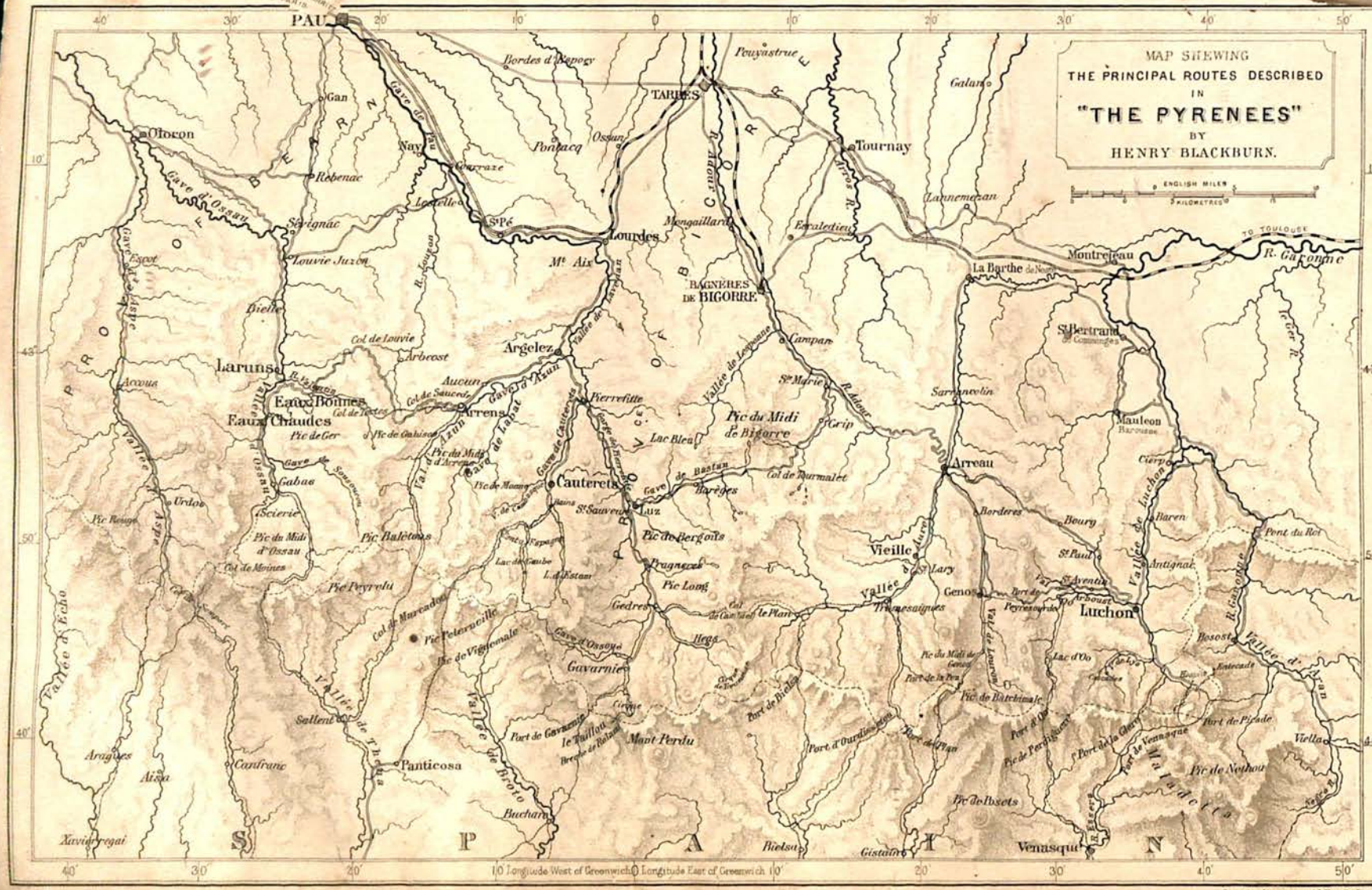
LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

PAGE

CHAP. X.—A Summer Shower 251
" Cascades 257
" A Procession 263
" The Lac d'Oo 265
" Route to Port de Venasque 269
" " " 270
" The Maladetta 273
" The Port de Venasque (from the south) 275
" Through the Woods 278

CHAP. XI.—En route to Toulouse 282
" The Valley after rain 283
" St. Bertrand de Comminges 285
" St. Sernin 291
" St. Etienne 293
" Toulouse 295
" Cloisters at the Musée 300
" Tarbes 306
" Bayonne 307

CHAP. XII.—Villa Eugénie 311
" A Natural Bridge 312
" The Coast near Biarritz 314
" " " 318
" Near St. Jean de Luz 322


MAP SHEWING
THE PRINCIPAL ROUTES DESCRIBED
IN
"THE PYRENEES"
BY
HENRY BLACKBURN.
ENGLISH MILES
KILOMETRES
PAU
TARBES
Tournay
Lourdes
Argelez
Larunse
Eaux Bonnes
Eaux Chaudes
Arreau
Cauterets
Luchon
Vieille
Panticosa
Venasque
Montrejeau
La Barthe de Neste
St Bertrand de Comminges
BAGNERES DE BIGORRE
Pic du Midi de Bigorre
Mt Aix
Mont Perdu
Pic de Nethou
Maladetta
Gavarnie
Pierrefitte
Campan
Arbeost
Col de Louvie
Col de Tentes
Col de Pourmalet
Col de Marcadau
Port de Gavarnie
Port de Bielsa
Port d'Ourdissetan
Port de Plan
Port de Vénasque
Port de Pinède
Port de la Glère
Port de la Picade
Pic de Perdiguère
Pic de Batchimale
Pic de Posets
Pic de Vignemale
Pic Peterneille
Pic Long
Pic de Bergons
Pic Balétous
Pic Peyrelu
Pic de Ger
Pic du Midi d'Ossau
Pic Rouge
Pic de Gabizos
Pic du Midi d'Arrens
Pic de Monné
Pic de Cambasque
Pic de Batchimale
Lac Bleu
Lac de Caube
Lac d'Estom
Lac d'Oo
Vallée d'Ossau
Vallée de Lavedan
Vallée de Luchon
Vallée de Barèges
Vallée d'Aure
Vallée d'Aran
Vallée d'Echo
Vallée de Broto
Vallée de Tena
Vallée de Lesponne
Vallée de Campan
Vallée de Larboust
Vallée de Lutour
Vallée de Lys
Vallée de Louron
Vallée de Luchon
Vallée de Bielsa
Vallée de Gistain
Vallée de Benasque
Vallée de Sallent
Vallée de Tena
Vallée de Broto

THE PYRENEES.

CHAPTER I.

BORDEAUX—LES LANDES—DAX—ORTHEZ.

"Je te salue ô nature fleurie,
Ton doux aspect vient raminer mon cœur:
O viens charmer, viens embellir ma vie,
Et dans mon âme apporter le bonheur!"

IN the early days of summer—when the streets of Paris begin to have a deserted appearance, and there is scarcely a chair to be had on the ride in the Bois de Boulogne at the fashionable hour; when '*Les Grandes Eaux*' at Versailles, or a 'dîner particulier' at Enghien, with moonlight boating on the lake afterwards, attract more visitors than the theatres or the sights of the town—a little green journal puts forth its leaves, and finds its way into the principal hotels and salons of Paris. It is called the

'*Moniteur des Eaux*,' and its mission is to set forth, in glowing colours, the attractions of the various watering-places of France, and to suggest to the weary, or invalid Parisian, where he may find recreation, and drink the waters of health.

Its outward appearance and illustrations are suggestive and enticing, redolent of sea air and mountain breezes. On the title-page there is a picture of an ideal watering-place, in which every conceivable costume (or absence of costume) is suggested, either for the mountains, the sands, or the sea; the illustration being surrounded by a border of oyster-shells, festooned with sea-weed. In the centre of each shell is a little vignette view of Ems, Etretât, or other well-known summer resort, and the page is completed by other imaginative pictures of horse-races, boat-races, mountains, cascades, and waterfalls, and above all, by a view of a great crowd, besieging the '*Office des Eaux*,' on the Boulevard des Capucins, in Paris, where particulars about accommodation at all French watering-places are to be obtained.

The catalogue of attractions reads well, and we have every assurance, that whether we seek sea breezes, or a sojourn amongst the mountains of the Pyrenees, we shall be well cared for, and 'on moderate terms.'

At Biarritz we are offered

'HABITATIONS ET HOTELS POUR TOUTES LES FORTUNES. Trois belles plages sablonneuses à des expositions différentes où la

mer présente une action variée. Beaux établissements de bains, confortables, bien installés, administrés par la commune. La station de bains la plus recherchée et la plus agréable de tout le littoral de l'Océan.'

In the Pyrenees, at Bagnières de Bigorre, for instance, the invalid, or the *ennuyée*, will find every comfort and convenience, thus:—

'Eaux salines, ferrugineuses, arsenicales, en boisson, bains et douches de toute forme.—Eau sulfureuse en boisson et bains à l'hydrofère.—*Vaporarium* complet et étuves, bains russes—Casino sous la direction de M. Max-Mayer. Musique au parc tous les jours.—Salon de conversation.—BALS et CONCERTS.—THÉÂTRE.—PROMENADES.—Bonnes voitures et chevaux de montagnes.'

'Le tout à des *prix inférieurs* à ceux des autres stations thermales des Pyrénées.'

The list includes nearly every sea-bathing place on the coast, and all the mineral watering-places of France; but as we are going southward, we are chiefly interested in those headed '*Pyrenees*.'

Under this title we find special mention made of PAU, EAUX CHAUDES, EAUX BONNES, CAUTERETS, GAVARNIE, ST. SAUVEUR, LUZ, BARÈGES, BAGNIÈRES DE BIGORRE, LUCHON, and BIARRITZ, and it is to these places that we are about to conduct the reader. They represent, in fact, a tour that may be called, for want of a better name, the 'regular round,' comprehending, in themselves and their environs, the most beautiful spots on the French side of the Pyrenees.

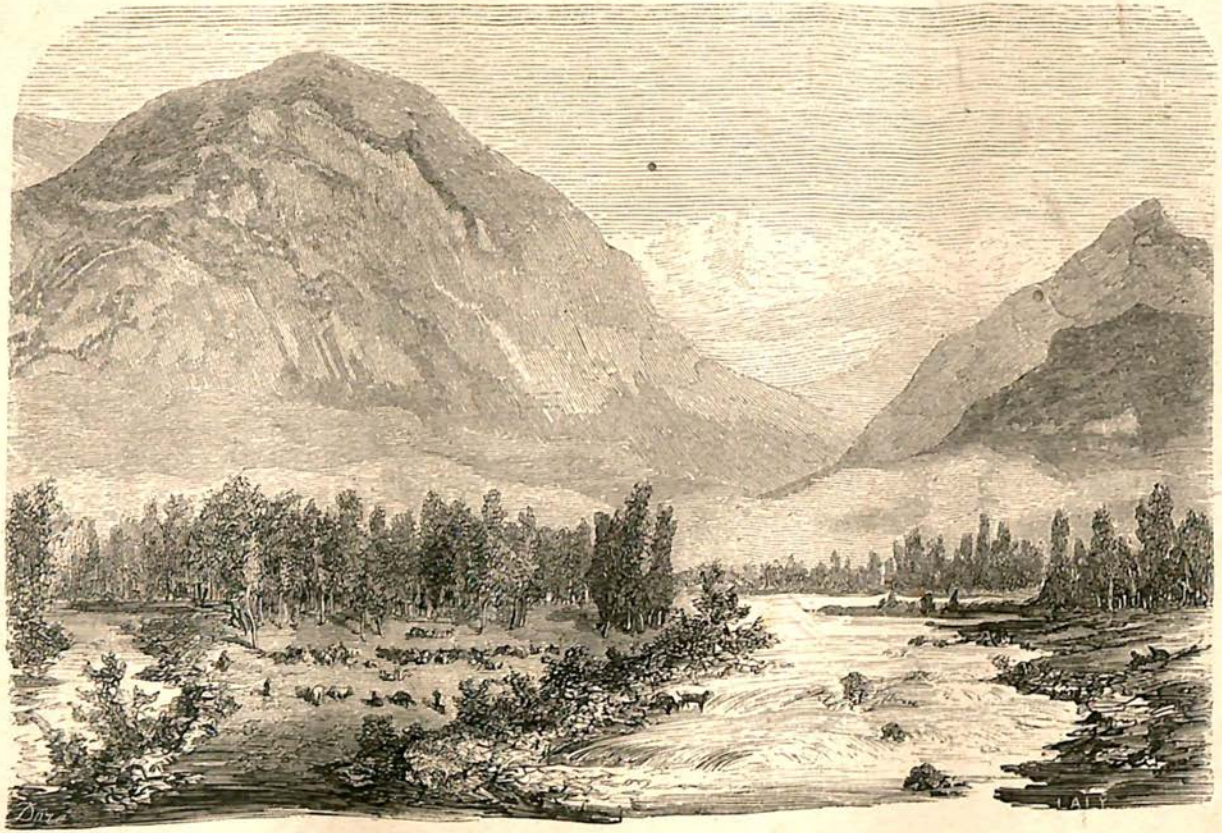
In the map which accompanies this volume, we

have indicated the route—approaching the Pyrenees by Bordeaux and Pau, confining ourselves almost exclusively to the French side of the mountains, and taking Biarritz and St. Jean de Luz, on our homeward journey.

The Pyrenees extend for about 260 miles from west to east, and the average height of this continuous chain of mountains is about 8500 feet. They reach in one almost unbroken line from the Bay of Biscay to the Mediterranean, standing like a wall between France and Spain, and barring all progress southward; a natural barrier against friends or foes, and especially effective in repressing the advance of that civilisation, to which Spain is so much averse, and which it is the ambition and the pride of France to be spreading in every other direction.

It is difficult to approach Spain, excepting at the extreme ends of this chain, where the mountains slope down to the sea, but there are numerous passes, or '*Ports*,' as they are expressively called, at the heads of many of the valleys, which Spanish smugglers know well, and through which travellers on foot or on horseback, may easily cross the frontier.

The valleys by which the different parts of the northern side of the Pyrenees are approached, are generally from 25 to 30 miles long, running nearly parallel to each other in a southerly direction, and each terminating in a 'cul de sac,' which necessitates



THE 'GAVE.'

a tiresome return journey, for those who cannot cross into the next valley by the higher passes, on foot, or on horseback.

In these valleys, as we see in the last illustration, there is generally a river (or '*Gave*,' as it is called in the language of the country), first a little rivulet or a leaping waterfall, then a roaring cataract, or a wide and turbulent stream, according to the formation of the valley through which it forces its way to the sea.

From the geographical position of the Pyrenees (42° N. latitude), the sun has much greater power than in Switzerland, the snow level is consequently higher,[1] and we find more fertile valleys, and mountains clothed, almost to their summits, with trees. The green pastures high up the mountain sides, the luxuriant growth of the box tree, the grandeur of the pine forests, and the general warmth of colour of the vegetation in summer time, constituting the great beauty of Pyreneean scenery.

We miss the lakes, that are the charm of Switzerland, but there are other attractions besides glaciers; there are mountain torrents to explore to their sources,

[1] In Switzerland the peaks of the Alps may be said to average nearly 11,000 feet high, and the snow level to be 7500 feet above the sea. In the Pyrenees there is no snow remaining below 9000 feet, and the highest peak, on the French side, is 11,000 feet. Thus it will be seen how little snow, comparatively, there is resting on the mountains of the Pyrenees in summer time.

there is a perfect garden of wild flowers for the botanist, plenty of work for the geologist, hunting, shooting, and fishing for those who prefer it, and a wealth of mineral waters gushing from the rocks everywhere, which the Romans valued for the healing of their sick, and which the French, in these latter days, have learned to utilise, and to convert into an attraction.

Let us now take our little green 'Moniteur' at its word, and start off to 'Les Eaux.'

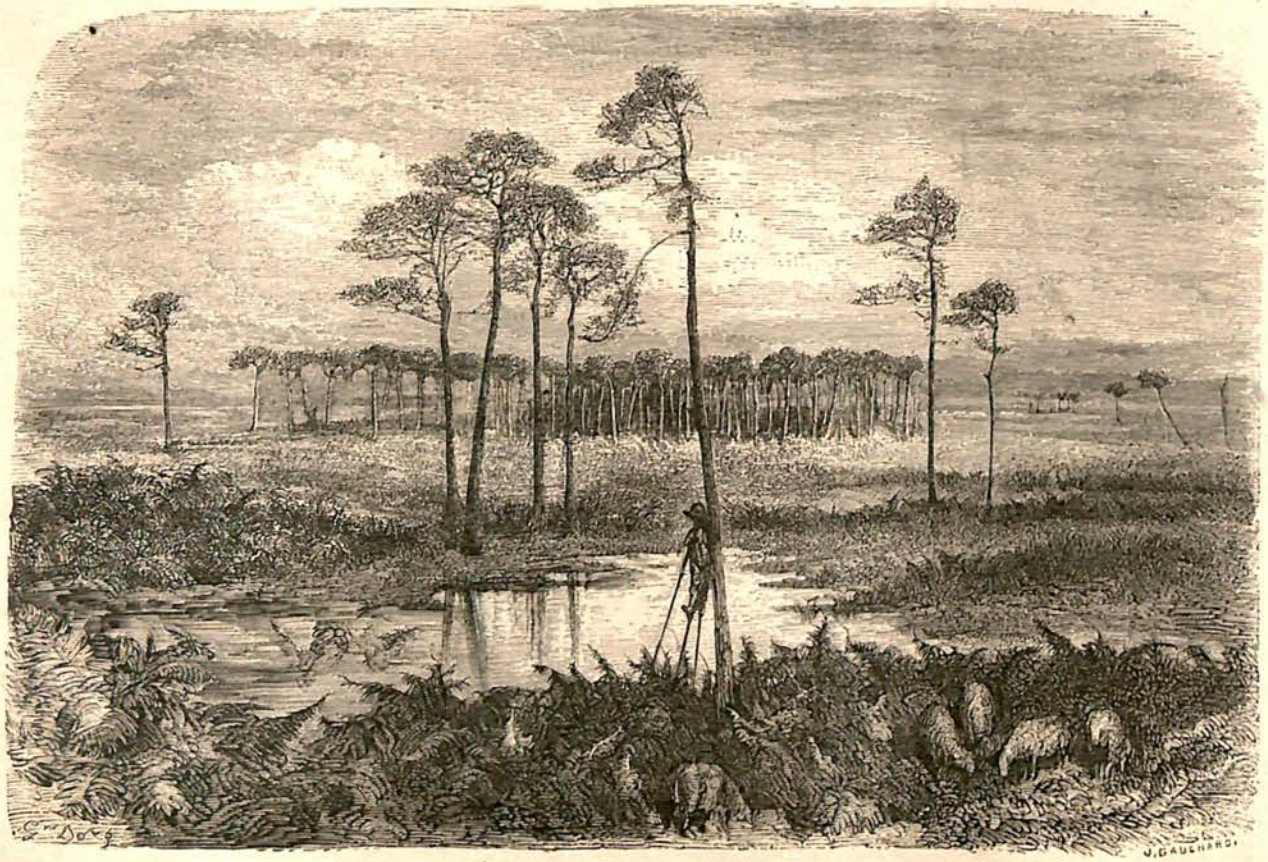
Taking no heed of certain seductive advertisements, which are posted up all over Paris, concerning

'Voyages de Plaisir aux Pyrénées.'
'Billets de Retour à prix reduits'

having nothing whatever to do with return tickets—shunning them, like appointments, as a loss of liberty—we will take our places direct to Pau.

BORDEAUX.

The night mail train to Bordeaux is one of the best



THE LANDES.

appointed and most comfortable in France, leaving Paris at 8.15 P.M., arriving at Bordeaux at 7.8 A.M., and Pau in the middle of the day. The journey can be easily broken by staying at Bordeaux, but for those of us who are hardy, and are anxious to waste neither time nor money on the road, it is perhaps better to go direct to Pau.

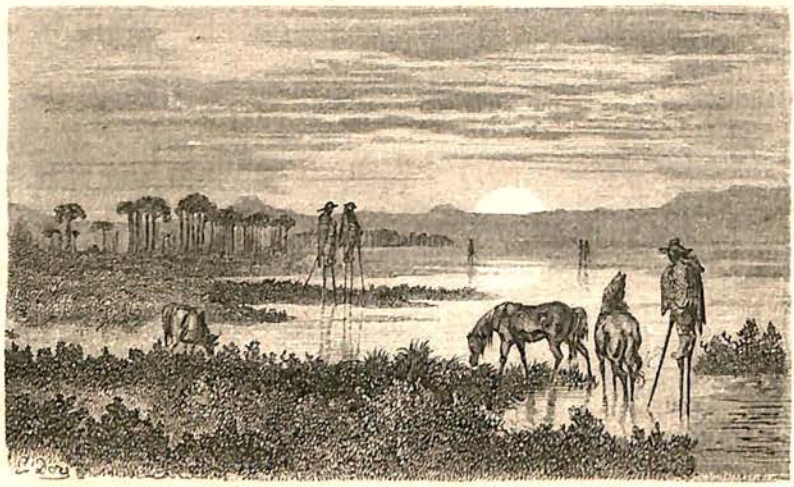
After an hour's halt at Bordeaux for breakfast, we are again on our way, and entering upon the quaint and picturesque district called 'Les Landes,' so admirably depicted by M. Doré in these illustrations, one especially, at page 13, being a perfect presentment of the scene from our carriage-windows.

This strange dull-looking tract of country, which stretches nearly the whole distance from Bordeaux to Dax, is planted with pine trees, divided by scanty patches of cultivation and acres of marshy ground, over which the mist hangs for miles.

It is difficult in the early morning to distinguish even the forms of the pine trees as we hurry past, and more difficult to persuade ourselves that there are human beings amongst the tree-tops, and that they are tending the sheep below them, where little pasture seems to grow.

Very quaint and strange these little figures appear in the distance, on their stilts (with a long pole to steady them, on the principle of a three-legged stool), propped up here and there like field scarecrows, which

office they probably hold as well as that of shepherd. Here and there we see one start off on some errand, and it is curious to notice the pace at which they



manage to get over the ground, taking tremendous strides with their stilts.

The inhabitants of 'Les Landes' are a hardy race, subject to great privations, especially the want of good water. They are accustomed from childhood to use these stilts, and to spend most of their lives in field work. Their subsistence is, however, principally derived from collecting resin from the pine trees. The bark is stripped, and the trees are then tapped; a vessel is placed below the incision in the trunk, into which the resin flows.

THE LANDES.

The effect is very singular and striking when seen for the first time, especially in half light or when the day is breaking. As we pass through these plantations, we see numbers of pine trees taking quite a mutilated human appearance, their trunks cut and slashed about, giving up their life-blood, as it were, and dying fast one by one; and the cork trees, also maimed, assuming most fantastic shapes, stretching out their numerous crippled limbs, as if appealing for commiseration.

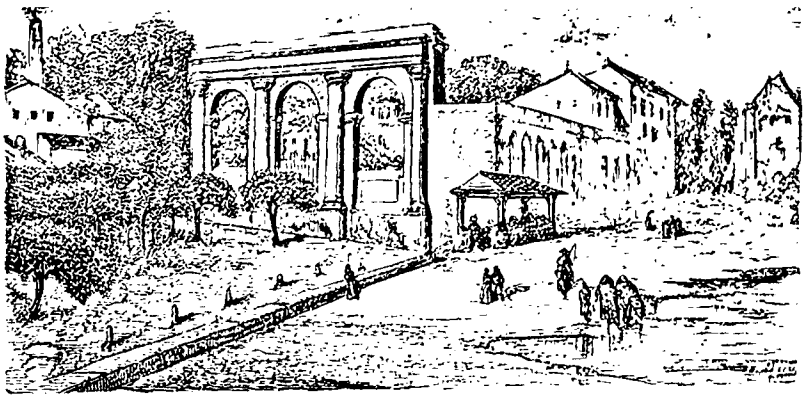
For miles in every direction we see nothing but the same broad plains covered with dismantled trees, and cannot help congratulating ourselves that the old diligence journey, with its weary, monotonous stages, is at last abolished.

Still the old system of travelling had its compensations, for we at least saw more of the country and the people, when after a long day with the broiling sun full upon us all the way from Bordeaux, we arrived towards evening at Dax, and saw the distant Pyrenees glowing in the setting sun, and had leisure, during the numerous halts, to explore one or two of the curious old towns en route.

The first of any importance which we pass is Dax, a dull and dirty old town situated on the river Adour, containing about 6000 inhabitants. Here there are remains of Roman baths, and the ruins of an aqueduct, an 'Etablissement des Bains' for the curative

waters, and a cathedral in a ruinous state—'toute sauvage,' as it has been well described.

The whole aspect of this place, when we last spent a day there, was quiet in the extreme, and there seemed little life or energy anywhere excepting in a few manufactories built on the river. The old ramparts, which



DAX.

form a sort of boulevard or promenade round the town, are grass-grown and deserted; and were it not for the pleasant breezes that come from the mountains, and the distant views which we obtain from this spot, we should have found it dreary indeed. The one thing to do was to bathe in the almost scalding stream,[1] to walk, to breakfast, and to bathe

[1] 212° Fahrenheit.

DAX.

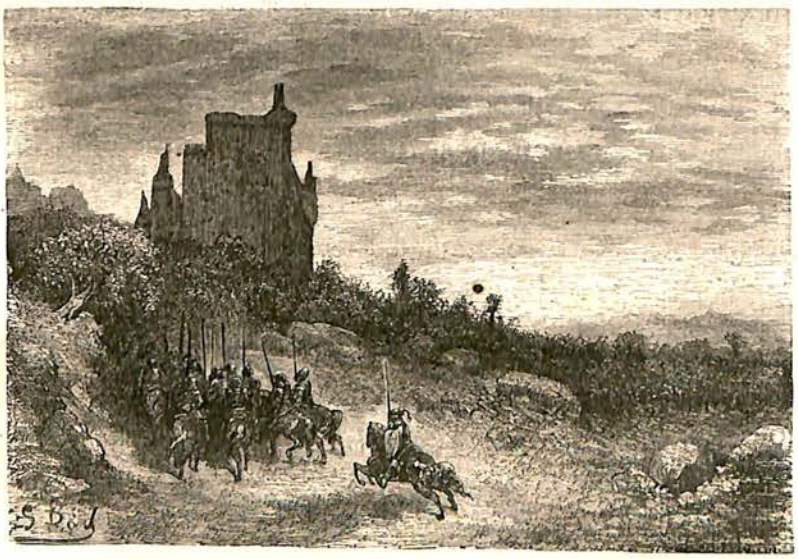
again. Near the centre of the town there rose up a cloud of steam all day, and on the ramparts in the afternoon the washerwomen brought their bundles to spread out on the walls, and the doctors their patients, to dry in the sun.

The water of these baths, which has been in high repute ever since the time of the Romans, still attracts numerous invalids who have neither the strength nor the opportunity to visit the more fashionable watering-places of the Pyrenees. To the taste it is not disagreeable, but its density and colour are anything but inviting to the bather.

We said we found Dax dull in the 'season' and in fine weather; what it is like on a wet day the reader may judge from the note of a friend, who, tired of watching the bathers at the 'Établissement,' 'rheumatic men and women sitting in the hot, black mud,' wrote home:—'A funeral procession passed us in the street, and I think I envied the occupant of the bier. He, at least, was leaving Dax, whereas I had to wait for the seven o'clock train!'

Twenty-five miles further on our journey, and we come to the old historic town of Orthez (the ancient residence of the Princes of Béarn), with the ruins of the 'Château de Moncade.' This old castle, standing in a commanding position above the town, is, in its present ruined state, worthy of much more than the passing glance that a railway traveller generally gives it.

A stroll up to the ruins themselves, and a peep under the old battlements and towers, will carry us back in imagination to that age of picturesque chivalry of which Froissart speaks in his Chronicles—how the famous Gaston Phœbus, Count de Foix, held captive in these prison walls all the real or fancied enemies of his power; how the most deadly hand-to-hand encounters were fought, and re-fought, on the ivy-covered bridge below us; and how this victorious and cruel Gaston finally lost his own life in hunting the wild boar in the forests at the foot of these mountains, and was buried with pomp at Orthez.



ORTHEZ.

'Memories of the middle ages' crowd upon us

here,[1] and there is (as at Dax), so little of the stir and bustle of modern life, that it seems more natural and appropriate to picture it, as M. Doré has done with his pencil, with groups of horsemen trooping up its avenues as of old.

There is no fear of being thought too progressive at Orthez. There is much more affinity with the twelfth than the nineteenth century. The old man who conducted us over the ruins, and bowed low while he held his hat for a franc, was a thorough conservative, and hated steam.

On the old road between Orthez and Pau (a distance of twenty-five miles, and which used to take five hours by diligence), there is still to be seen the ancient capital of Béarn, Lescar; and above the town the ruins of a castle and of the church of *Nôtre Dame*, both of the tenth century, where it is said several of the princes of Béarn were buried. If we visit this spot from Pau, as we can easily do, we shall be amply repaid, not in finding tombs or many tenth-century relics, but from the complete idea we obtain when on the spot, as at Orthez, of the habits of warfare of these princes, their strategical skill and their science, displayed both in the position they chose for their chateaux and in their method of building.

[1] Sir John Froissart, in his Chronicles, gives some very interesting particulars of his visit to Gaston Phœbus at Orthez.

And it is from an eminence, not far from Lescar, that we who come from the north by the road, obtain our first good view of the beautiful fertile plain of Béarn, with its pretty villages, lying at the foot of the Pyrenees; the birth-place of many whose names are illustrious in French history, and especially of Henry IV., whose memory is so closely identified with this district, and with the Château of Pau, whose towers we see rising above the town.

CHAPTER II.

PAU.

THERE are some places in the Pyrenees that we shall best describe by comparing them for an instant to their prototypes in Switzerland.

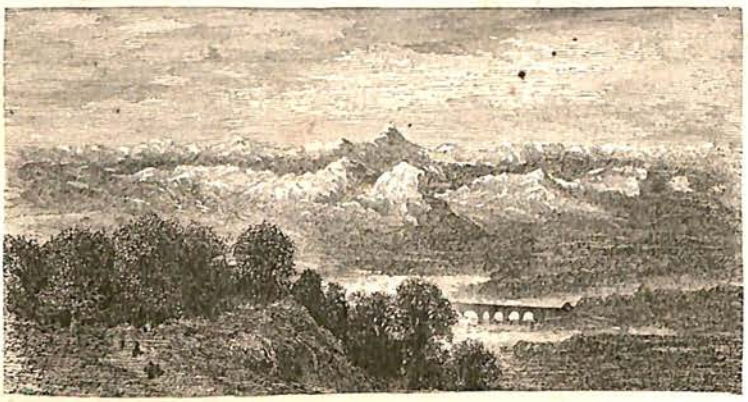
Thus, in its situation, and in the circumstance of its being chosen as one of the starting-places for the mountains, Pau is the *Berne* of the Pyrenees. Like Berne, it has its history, its monuments, its peculiar customs, its interest as the capital of an industrious and thriving province, and, above all, the same glorious view of distant mountains from its terraces and park.

From the terrace on the 'Place Royale' at Pau, one of the principal public walks near the centre of the town, a view of the whole western range is spread out before us, with the fertile Val d'Ossau in the middle distance, and the roaring 'Gave,' fed by glacier streams and swollen by torrents, immediately at our feet; and we could not, if we would, choose a more fitting or

delightful spot to make our first acquaintance with the Pyrenees. We are here, as it were, on the threshold of the sanctuary, at the very feet of the mountains; we feel their presence, and long to approach them.

How shall we picture to the reader the scene on this fine summer afternoon in August?

A luxuriant beauty of landscape—in the middle distance an undulating sea, soft in outline, varied in tint, half cloud, half mountain-top; rich pasture-land in the valleys, dotted here and there with pretty white



VIEW FROM PAU.

cottages, and chateaux peeping through deep masses of foliage—a bright golden hue over the land, a purple mist amongst the hills, and a sweet wind coming from the south.

The Pic du Midi d'Ossau, which is the most

prominent of the distant peaks, is about twenty-six miles from us, and is 9790 feet above the sea, but the outlines are so blended with the clouds, and the forms are altogether so indistinct, that we can form very little idea of their actual distance or height by the eye. We shall approach them on our route to Eaux Bonnes, by the broad valley immediately before us, but we must first see something of the town of Pau.

As we were jolted over the rough stony streets on our arrival yesterday, we had glimpses of a large and apparently thriving town, situated on an eminence 150 feet above the river, with a picturesque castle as its principal architectural feature, and a magnificent park of trees, extending for nearly a mile on high ground, by the banks of the Gave.

The population of Pau is about 21,000, of whom a large number are foreigners, attracted both by the natural beauty of the situation and the reputation of the town as a mild and healthy winter place of residence. There are three or four important streets, of which the principal is the 'Rue de Prefecture,' but the majority are narrow and irregularly built, and have no particular attractive features. There are, however, abundant signs of prosperity and wealth in the large new houses that are rising in every direction, and in the extent and almost Parisian variety of the wares in the shops, although at this time of year the streets are half

deserted, and the principal ones have almost as silent an aspect as a fashionable street in London out of the season.

It is only in the busy market-place, and in some of the nooks and corners of industry in the town, that we find much sign of commercial activity; and it is only on Sundays and fêtes, that many of the Béarnais are to be seen. Their costume is now so thoroughly modernised, that if it were not for the peculiar caps (berrets) worn by the men, and the striped handkerchiefs of the women, there would be little in the groups of peasantry to distinguish them from the inhabitants of any town in France.

Pau, the ancient capital of the kingdom of Navarre and the chef-lieu[1] of the Basses Pyrenees, occupies such an important place, not only in the estimation of the Béarnais themselves but in French history, that we must say a few words as to its origin.

It is a curious fact that the origin of the Château of Pau, and indeed of the town itself, which was afterwards built round its walls, is indirectly owing to the Moors, who, crossing the Pyrenees from Spain, made such frequent sallies upon the Béarnais that their princes were compelled to fortify the strongest positions that commanded the plain. In self-defence the

[1] A decree was passed on the 4th October, 1790, constituting the kingdom of Navarre, Béarn and the 'pays Basques' one department, the 'chef-lieu' being fixed at Pau.

inhabitants of the Val d'Ossau gave permission to one of these princes to build a chateau on an eminence

on the banks of the Adour, preserving to themselves certain rights and privileges of government.

On a plot of ground on the right bank of the Gave were planted three stakes *(palis)* to mark the boundaries,[1] and on the spot where the centre one was planted the chateau was built, being called the 'Château de Pal,' from thence Pau. A town soon began

[1] On the arms of Pau, granted in 1482, which are engraved at the end of this chapter, we see the three *palis* or stakes, over the middle of which there is a peacock with outspread tail, the whole surmounted by a crown and the cradle of Henri IV.

to spring up around its walls, and in the middle of the fourteenth century, under the direction of Gaston Phœbus, Comte de Foix, strong fortifications were added, a church was built, markets and fairs were established, and various rights and privileges were conferred upon the inhabitants. It was thus that it became the capital of the kingdom of Navarre, being honoured with the title for the first time in a patent of Jean d'Albert and Queen Catherine his wife, in 1502; but what contributed afterwards to its growth and prosperity was probably its being the favourite resort of the kings of Navarre.

The climate of Pau, and its value to invalids as a place of winter residence, has, like that of other towns in the south of France, been a little over-rated, but statistically it is one of the most healthy,[1] and it has natural attractions almost unequalled.

Ever since 1814, when 5000 English soldiers, commanded by Lord Beresford, took forcible possession of Pau, it has been gradually growing into favour amongst English people, who now form quite a little colony from October to May, or June, numbering more than two thousand, the completion of the railway from Paris bringing more visitors every year. This last has its drawbacks, in converting what was once a snug little côterie of English people into a fashionable and

[1] See Dr. Taylor's 'Climate of Pau.'—London: Churchill.

expensive watering-place, where houses in good situations are let for 200*l.* for the winter season.

There is an English club well supplied with books, and a good subscription library. A pack of hounds is kept up. There is shooting to be had in the environs and plenty of gaiety in the way of pic-nics and balls during the winter.

Thirty years ago, when the journey from England was much more expensive and tedious, the English residents numbered about forty, and it was possible to live here cheaply and well. It is true that the houses were inferior, that the streets were even more badly paved than now, that there were few shops and not many of the luxuries of life, but a *furnished* house could then be obtained for 50*l.* a year.

From an original little pamphlet published at Avranches in Normandy, we gather one or two curious particulars of life at Pau at this period.

'Pau was a small and particularly foul town, of some 8000 to 9000 inhabitants, the residence of less than fifty English people, whose main attraction was economy. They took up their quarters often for years, and were none of your birds of passage that now flock to it; they were content with houses of moderate size and moderately furnished, and there was a good deal of sociability and simplicity which have died a natural death.'

The climate seems to have been much the same as

in the year 1867, but we are told that 'The sun in January used not to be thought so terrific as to require a calico covering to a man's hat, or a dirty white umbrella over his head!' The Rue de Prefecture was not less dirty, cold, and damp than it is at the present day; the Park was badly kept (as indeed it is now); and the 'well-like cold'[1] of some of the dwelling-houses was thought worthy of record.

It is interesting to learn also from the same authority that in those days the saddle or the sedan-chair were the only means of locomotion;[2] that good shooting was to be had; that woodcocks, quails, and wild ducks were to be heard of in the neighbourhood, when at the present time there are 'a dozen chasseurs to every *pièce de gibier!*'

We hardly know whether to be amused at, or to regret, the change that has come over Pau. The town has greatly benefited by this influx of visitors, but 'society' has suffered. As an old resident expressed it to us, 'These thriving millionaires, these *rentiers*, oppress us. Where they come from no one knows. They bring their families, their servants, their horses,

[1] An expression, which we have heard residents make use of more than once, showing that invalids must be careful in the choice of their winter dwellings even at Pau.

[2] This mode of conveyance was succeeded by a little one-horse vehicle, now rather uncommon, called satirically a 'vinaigrette,' a little box on wheels just large enough to hold one person, the driver running at the side.

and surround themselves with every luxury and comfort, and are to their poorer neighbours like a blight on the land.'

THE PARK.

But, whether for good or evil, we have only to spend a few weeks here, to walk in the evening in the beautiful Park, to see the moonlight view from its terraces, to explore the environs, and enjoy the air even in this hot summer-time, to understand what brings so many of our countrymen hither. The remarkable stillness of the atmosphere (which in summer is seldom close, and in winter is delicious) is ascribed to 'the peculiar position of the town, which is sheltered on the north by the distant rising ground of the Landes, on the south and east by the moun-

tains, and on the west by the Park itself, which presents a perfect wall of foliage against the wind. It is almost impossible to credit the fact, that in spite of the traditional stillness of the atmosphere at Pau, seventy-nine oak and beech trees were once destroyed here in a day, during a storm.

To the passing visitor, the stillness of the air, the silence and somewhat neglected appearance of the town and its public walks, give it a mournful look. We see at once that Pau is not a favourite resort in summer, and are not long in perceiving (what we shall have plenty of evidence of bye-and-bye) that the French people care little or nothing for scenery, and continually turn their backs upon the mountains. The unrivalled site of this town is becoming wasted by buildings of the manufactory type being erected so as to block out the best view; the terrace itself is out of repair, grass-grown, and heaped up with rubbish and dead leaves; and the Hôtel de France, which stands in the best situation in Pau, thrusts its visitors into a cellar-like salle à manger below the level of the road at the *back* of the building, giving the frontage facing the view to the stables and the pigs.

If the public walks and buildings have a generally neglected air; if the pavement of the principal streets is so much out of repair that 'au bout de cinq minutes vos pieds vous disent d'une manière très-intelligible, que vous êtes à deux cents lieues de Paris;' if the

Park in autumn time is so strewn with dead leaves that its paths are obliterated—there is little sign of neglect or decay at the Château. Here, if anywhere, we should have hailed any marks of dilapidation, but everything is new and bright; for—as a half-satirical Frenchman expressed it, as nearly as we can remember his poetic simile—'as the snow falls, obliterating landmarks and leaving all pure and white to view, so has an imperial providence, watching over Pau, covered these tottering ruins with fresh white stone, to the despair of the antiquary and the comfort of the custodian.'

Approaching the Château by a street leading from the Place Royale, and entering the courtyard by a

garden with smooth walks and trim beds of flowers, under a doorway or screen of newly-carved stone-work,

it is evident that in a few years these busy hands will have so repaired, re-decorated, and improved (?) the Castle and its precincts, that its historic interest will be much diminished.

Visitors are not permitted much time for regrets, for they are immediately placed *en queue* by several polite attendants, and marched through a few of the apartments in less than a quarter of an hour.

Ascending a wide staircase which leads out of the courtyard, we are conducted through a suite of rooms hung with old tapestries from the Gobelins and Brussels. The furniture is of the time of Henri IV., much of it collected and placed here by the late Louis Philippe: rich inlaid cabinets, marbles, elaborately carved chairs and mantelpieces, medallions, jewels, and various works of art, all set about in stiff and formal fashion. But in spite of this formality and stiffness, inseparable from state apartments on show, there were little nooks and corners in mullioned windows here and there, and certain signs of comfort and of having been *lived in*, that were charming in their suggestion of what this Château must once have been—in short, what we in England should call a 'perfect old home.'

The most curious objects were the tapestries on the walls, delightful in their sobriety and repose of colour, wonderful in the blending of their delicate tints when contrasted with much of the furniture and

gilding, and worthy of a much more careful inspection than any visitor is ever allowed to give them. We were hurried through all the rooms as a matter of course, and only allowed a short pause at what is considered the chief object of attraction, the cradle of Henri IV. made out of a large tortoise-shell, which is exhibited under a canopy in one of the bed-rooms. The crowds of country-people that flock here on Sundays and holidays to see this relic, caring apparently for little else in the Château, attest the love and veneration that still exists for the memory of Henri IV.

We should not omit to mention the famous Tower of Montauzet, with its dungeon, on one side of the courtyard of the Castle, reminding us (not from its architecture, for this has little pretension) of another prison-house in the air, the Tower of the Palazzo Vecchio at Florence. The Tower of Montauzet is nearly eighty feet in height, and the dungeons which are built into the thickness of its walls are about forty feet from the ground. The towers of the Château, and the exterior walls which almost overhang the river, are perhaps the most interesting parts of the building; the *Tour de la Monnoye*, of which some ruins were discovered as lately as 1864, being the most ancient.

But we get very little idea of the outward aspect of the Château, and of the purpose and design of its founders as a building of defence, until we descend the

steep bank, cross the bridge over the Gave, and obtain a view looking upwards, as in the next illustration. It is here that we see it in its picturesque character, can best judge of its comparative dimensions, and carry away a distinct remembrance both of the Château and of the town.[1]

It is impossible to wander about Pau and the neighbourhood without being struck with the continual allusions to the memory of Henri IV., as if he had reigned only yesterday, and also at the same time without noticing the absence of anything like a noble monument to his memory. On the terrace of the Place Royale, the Béarnais have erected a white marble statue to their beloved monarch; there are three bas-reliefs on the pedestal representing, first, the infancy of the prince, passed in the neighbouring mountains; second, his 'humanity' at the siege of Paris; and third, his bravery at the battle of Ivry.

As a work of art it is altogether poor and feeble, and in character and expression fails completely; we cannot realize either the 'Solomon of peace' or the 'Cæsar of war,' nor trace any signs of that intrepidity of character, energy, or *bonhommie* of which we hear so much. M. Taine asks why they have made him

[1] Here it occurs to us to remark how many cities owe their place in our recollection to some such distinctive, not necessarily historic, but prominent, architectural feature—some central point of interest and importance.

PAU.

look so sad, and suggests, perhaps with some reason, that he was tired of hearing his praises sung by a faithful people!

An inscription written by a native poet (translated into modern French) runs thus:—

'Sais-tu quel est le Roi que t'offre cette image?
Il fut grand, généreux, de son peuple l'ami;
Idolâtré partout, à la ville, au village;
Partout il fut pleuré . . . . J'y suis, c'est notre Henri!'

However historians may differ in their estimate of the character of Henri IV., it is very certain that he held a high place in the affections of his people. His deeds are recorded in song and story, with the simple affection that we are accustomed to regard the memory of our own King Alfred; and we hear these songs so frequently in our travels, that it would hardly be doing justice to the loyalty of the poets of Béarn, if we did not give a translation in French of at least one of them.

The following, written in especial praise of '*noust Henri*,' 'our Henry,' as they love to call him, is a good example:—

'D'autres du grand Henri, on raconte la gloire,
Un poête fameux,[1] au temple du mémoire,
Entre les meilleurs rois, a placé son beau nom;
Sa vertu, sa valeur, ont partout grand renom.

[1] Voltaire.

Moi, je vais le montrer sortant de la coquille
Parmi ses Béarnais, au sein de sa famille.
Je dirai dans mes vers, comment ce roi nouveau
Fut soigné par nos mains en quittant son berceau.
O, France ! ce bon prince, objet de ton ivresse,
Ce prince à qui le peuple a gardé sa tendresse,
Tu le dois au Béarn.

* * * * * *

Prêtes nous la couleur et une style fleurie,
Allons, ne tarde pas ; c'est pour notre Henri.'

Is there not a charm about this song, a ring of true metal in its music, and a genuine expression of love and pride, especially in the last lines, that is rare in these days?

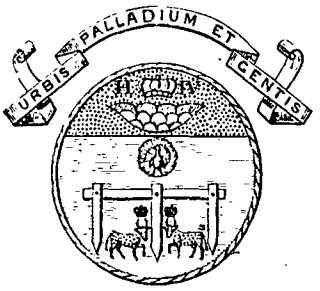
The Béarnais poems and ballads are exotic, and do not bear transplanting, or we should have been tempted to have given another extract; we would suggest, however, to those who care for these things, that there is something quite foreign to the style of the majority of French writers—something, indeed, very like true poetry—stored up or thrown aside, in the old song-books of the Béarnais, which our readers may discover for themselves, on high shelves, in the old book-shops at Pau, covered with the dust of time.

But we have come to see the mountains rather than the towns, and, having taken our places in the diligence for to-morrow for Eaux Bonnes, will go once more to the Place Royale, to see the view.

The air is perfectly still on the terrace, but a few miles from us we can see tree-tops bending in the

breeze, and the light fleecy clouds that surround the summits of the more distant mountains keep changing form as we watch them, now descending into far-off valleys, nestling in their darkness for a while, like little snow fields—then dispersing suddenly, and casting soft shadows in their flight across the plain.

As we linger until sunset, the outlines of the mountains have gradually blended with fresh companies of dark clouds coming from the south, leaving the Pic du Midi d'Ossau alone above them shining in the sun, and the valley half hidden in a veil of mist. The aspect of the clouds is rather ominous for our journey, but of this we take little heed. The air, so pure, so soft, so still, seems to us perfection; we can do nothing but marvel at the beauty of the scene, and thank from our hearts the princes of Béarn, for planting their *palis* by the Gave de Pau.



LIBRARY
OF THE
BOMBAY
BRANCH
OF THE
ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

"Si vous veniez à Larens le dimanche, vous verriez danser les *branles*."

CHAPTER III.

VAL D'OSSAU—EAUX CHAUDES.

EARLY in the morning all the idlers at Pau are astir to see the start of the diligences for 'Les Eaux,' and at the 'bureau' of the Hôtel de l'Europe, in the Rue de Prefecture, we find plenty of activity and bustle.

There are several diligences, and they are all to be crowded to excess, and packed on the roof with merchandise to the last available inch of space. The travellers are, for the most part, French men and women with enormous boxes, multitudes of warm wraps, bundles of walking-sticks, sun-shades of all colours, several little dogs, and no alpenstocks.

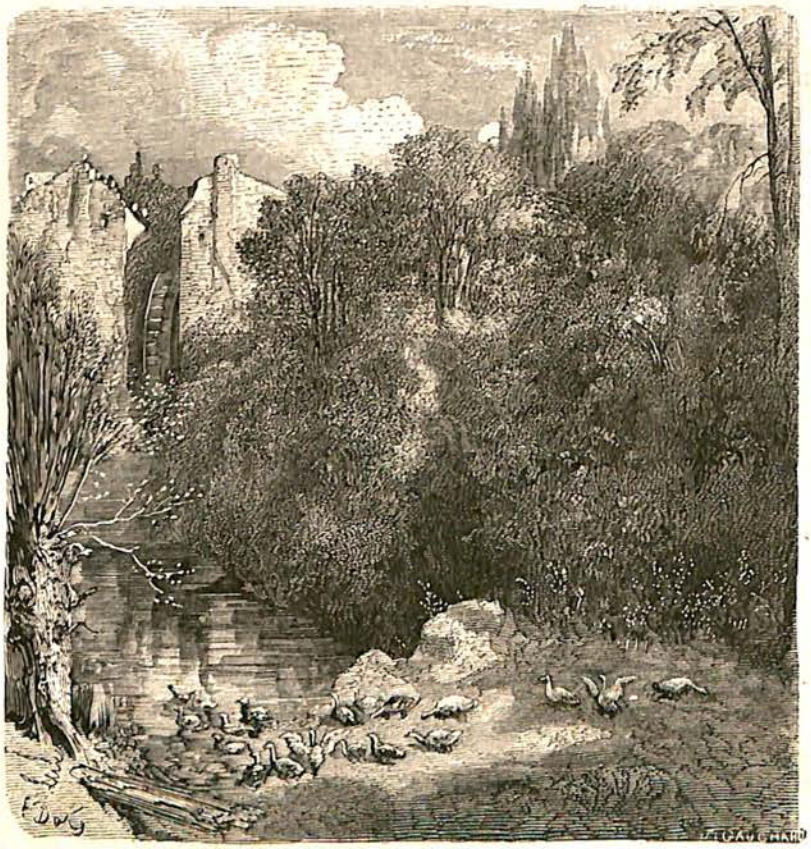
The author, whom we have taken for our 'compagnon de voyage,' remarks, respecting choosing places in a diligence, that it is better on all occasions to take the 'banquette,' or seat on the roof behind the driver; that it is true, if you fall, or the diligence is over-

turned, you get your head broken, but if not, you get the best view! It is no easy matter to scramble into this position, and sometimes more difficult to extricate yourself, and if, as in the case to-day, you find yourself wedged up against a pile of cheeses on one side, and a perfect forest of live fowls in a state of semi-strangulation on the other, it is questionable whether it is quite the position for the calm enjoyment of the scene en route.

The distance to Eaux Bonnes is about twenty-four miles, and to Eaux Chaudes, to which we shall go first, twenty-seven, and the journey occupies six or seven hours; it is for the most part along a hot, dusty road, and the direction being due south, you have a steady tête à tête with the sun for the greater part of the day.

The diligences are neither better nor worse than is customary in France; they are easy and slow, dirty within, and gaily painted without. The five little ill-conditioned horses that rattle us over the stony streets, under the Castle walls, over the Gave, and

through the suburb of Jurançon, with a flourish, a jingle of bells, and great promise of speed, soon subside into something like a walk, and then go to sleep. The driver takes his breakfast (which he



might have done before starting), and receives visitors, until we have so many additions in the shape of peasant men and women hanging on to the steps and ledges of the vehicle, that it groans under the weight.

The heat soon becomes very great, and the dust, that travels with us, is almost intolerable; we roll on like a chariot of the sun riding on a cloud.

After proceeding about fifteen miles in this fashion, it is a positive relief to arrive at the village of Louvie Juzon, where, on crossing a bridge over the Gave, the diligence is driven into a court-yard, the horses are taken out, and we are informed that we have an hour and a half for '*restauration*.'

'Faites vous descendre à l'Hôtel des Pyrénées à Louvie, et demandez des rognons à la brochette et des truites fraîches,' are the pleasant instructions in a French guide-book, instructions that are carefully

carried out by most of the passengers, but as we seem to have just breakfasted, we may do better by strolling out into the valley, or by the banks of the

Gave, which is here a rapid and turbulent river, with several companies of pigs reposing in the sun on the shore.

In the first part of our route, we have passed several little villages, and the private houses and country seats of 'propriétaires'—through a pleasant, well-cultivated valley, watered by the river Neiss, and as we approached the town of Sevignac by a long ascent (where the Val d'Ossau was first entered), we gained occasional glimpses of the Pic du Midi.

The sides of these valleys are covered thickly with box trees, and there is good pasturage on the high ground. The lower part is almost always well cultivated and fruitful; we see corn and maize in abundance and the vines growing wild amongst the trees. The women and children are at work in the fields, and the men tending sheep or collecting wood on the

heights, excepting when they are engaged in a more lucrative occupation.

If we were asked what were the habits and customs of the inhabitants of these valleys, and were to answer from our own experience, we should say distinctly—begging.

It is said that English visitors have completely demoralised the Valley of Chamounix, in Savoy, and that the curés are in despair; but whatever sins we have committed in Switzerland, the French people have here done worse, the difference between the two nations being this, that the latter enjoy indiscriminate almsgiving, and we do not.

In the Pyrenees begging is decidedly encouraged. What we 'cold phlegmatic northerners' are apt to consider a nuisance, is a pleasure to a Frenchman, and nothing seems to make him happier than to be a dispenser of sous. The result in this valley is demoralising to an extent that would scarcely be credited excepting by eye-witnesses. As we drive along we see the peasantry leaving their work in the fields at the sound of approaching wheels, and crouching at the roadside in attitudes of pain and misery; girls and boys leave their play to follow the carriages, and whine for '*quelque chose;*' crops are half gathered, and work of all kinds is neglected during the season of sous; the cry is everywhere, 'Give, give,' for is it not the highway of the bountiful?

A girl of sixteen, well dressed and evidently well to do, comes up with a bouquet of wild flowers, which she has gathered at the roadside; she asks ten sous for it (about the wages of a day's work), but she will take no less; and on receiving the money will immediately ask for the bouquet back again, to sell to some one else. It is hard, indeed, as Tom Moore says,

> 'To be disturbed in romance by pecuniary views,
> For while throwing their flowers they keep asking for sous.'

And this is not all, for those of the inhabitants who have not brought up their children to the liberal profession of begging, have invented another ingenious and profitable mode of life, that of turning the cascades in the neighbourhood into penny peep-shows, shutting them off, so that they can only be approached by a wicket gate, kept by one of themselves. But what can we say when the majority of visitors enjoy the giving; we can only record the fact that wherever we go '*Quelque chose, quelque chose pour l'amour de Dieu*,' is the chorus of the hills.

The most agreeable method of travelling in the Pyrenees is undoubtedly to take a carriage with two horses, which may be hired for twenty francs a day, and retain it for the whole journey. Those who are not mountaineers have continually to retrace their

steps to approach another point in the chain; thus when we have visited Eaux Chaudes and Eaux Bonnes, we must either return down the valley to get to Cauterets (a detour of about fifty miles, and generally occupying two days), or pass over the Col de Torte on foot or on horseback.[1] The latter is rather steep, and fatiguing work, but Cauterets can thus be reached in one long day, and the views to be obtained en route make it far preferable.

The expense of taking carriages in the Pyrenees is of course greater than going by diligence, but so much more is seen of the country, and it is altogether so much more enjoyable, when a pleasant party is made up, that it is worth while for English people to fraternise a little at Pau, or other starting-point, and join in taking a carriage, which easily accommodates four persons.[2] Some of our pleasantest recollections of the Pyrenees are of these parties made up accidentally, and continued through a tour of a month or six weeks—prolonged afterwards, as we have heard in more than one instance, in a tour through life!

English people who have been accustomed to travel in Switzerland, and to 'have it all their own way,' as the saying is, soon discover that matters are not

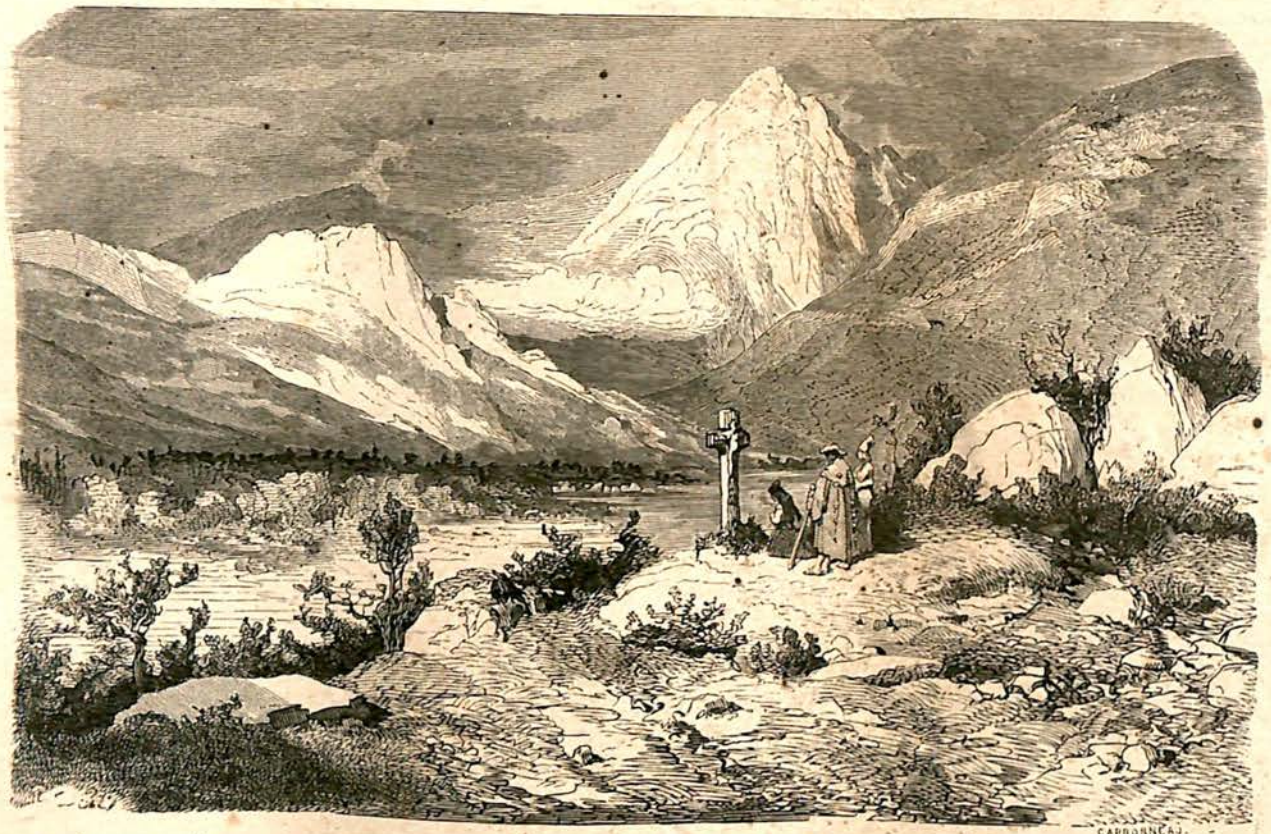
[1] A new but steep carriage-road has lately been opened between Eaux Bonnes and Arrens, to Argelez, which avoids this detour.

[2] When four or five persons travel together with luggage four horses must be taken. The tariff is 40 francs a day, but an arrangement can be made at a lower rate for the whole tour of the Pyrenees.

arranged for their especial comfort or convenience, that in truth, their wants or wishes are very little considered in this country; and that there is a certain sense of isolation in their position, which tends to make them fraternise when they meet, and travel together as much as possible. There are also other reasons for thus banding together as it were, reasons which may develope themselves in the course of our travels.

But to continue our journey. Whilst we have halted at Louvie several carriages and diligences have passed, or put up at the inn, and out of perhaps a hundred travellers we have seen scarcely a dozen of our countrymen. They halt here for about two hours, and are again all en route. Proceeding up the valley, still in a southerly direction, we pass near the ruins of the 'Castel Geloz,' an ancient château, which from its position must have been an important fortress in the times when each state held its own with a strong arm.

The valley is broad, but the mountains shut us in on both sides; they are cultivated to a considerable height, and we can see (with a glass) the women making hay on the steep sides of the mountains, where there seems hardly foothold for an izzard, and here and there can trace little white streaks that look like snow amongst the trees. These are the marble quarries for which the valley is famous, large quan-



VALLÉE D'OSSAU.

tities being excavated and sent to Paris and other towns in France every year.[1]

In two hours after leaving Louvie we arrive at Larens, a town at the head of the valley, and the last in the Val d'Ossau. Here we leave the diligence (sending on our luggage), as the rest of the journey can easily be performed on foot. At this point we are in a complete *cul de sac*, from which we see no means of exit, excepting by retracing our steps. Immediately in front of us rises a bluff headland called the 'Mont de Gourzy,' and above it the prominent, and now to us familiar, Pic de Ger, but we can see neither the way to Eaux Chaudes, nor Eaux Bonnes.

Larens is the 'chef-lieu' of the canton, a picturesque old town, with narrow streets and old gables, and the centre of a large agricultural population, but much given in summer time to making money out of the crowds of pleasure-seekers that pass through every day. Its district reaches nearly to the frontier of Spain, and comprises within its limits the famous Pic du Midi. 'We are far from rich here, our mountain population pay no taxes, and are rather unruly in the winter,' was a remark respecting Larens which we did

[1] In this part of the Val d'Ossau, in the little village of Bagés Beost, lives the French botanist, Gaston Sacage, whose collection of herbs and flowers of the Pyrenees is very curious and complete. Those who have time and are making collections, will do well to pay a visit to M. Sacage, who delights in showing and explaining his collection.

not understand, until we learnt that the 'unruly' part of the inhabitants consisted of izzards (chamois), wolves, and bears![1]

The more civilised portion of the community are here in large numbers; the town is evidently *en fête*. There are more than a hundred people collected in the square and in the adjoining fields; they are dancing, singing, and enjoying themselves with the utmost freedom and content. In every direction we see others arriving, and there is a large contingent of the fashionable world who have come down from Eaux Bonnes to see the fun.

The costume of some of the country people is very pretty and picturesque looking, especially that of the women. The capulet, the characteristic head-dress of this valley, covering the head like the hood of a bournous, and reaching sometimes down to the waist (which so many artists have taken advantage of in their sketches in the Val d'Ossau, when worn in a white material, as it often is, in the fields), is especially captivating as a scarlet head-dress, covering a black bodice, and white full vest, open at the throat, which is generally adorned with a little gold cross tied with black velvet.

[1] The *Hôtel des Touristes* at Larens is a favourite resort for artists, not quite so popular, or as crowded, as the one at Bettwys in Wales; but possessing recommendations, both in accommodation and in the surrounding scenery, worth remembering by those who, seeking 'fresh fields and pastures new,' turn their steps towards the Pyrenees.

The men, with their embroidered cloth jackets, dark knee-breeches, scarlet vests, and gay sashes, wearing the 'berret' (a round flat cap made, indifferently, of red or brown cloth), with their canvas shoes tied with sandals, or with clogs turned up at the toes—are fitting partners for a rustic dance.

As the people flock in, old and young, the elder ones range themselves about the square, standing, or sitting on benches under quaint and dark old archways; the women with the spindle and distaff, the men with their pipes; groups appearing at odd-shaped windows overhead, men and children crowding upon carts, seated on horseback, or on raised seats, form a background for a scene which Wilkie would have gloried in.

It was no particular festival to-day (such as takes place on the 15th of August every year, when the whole valley takes part in it), but a sort of harvest-gathering and rejoicing, a 'rough and tumble,' with singing and dancing ad libitum. The instruments and music were simple enough, the former being generally a shepherd's pipe, and an instrument with two or three strings, which they struck with a stick, called a *tambourin*. The dances were taken to quick time, fifteen or twenty couples stood up and whirled away with all the energy of an Irish jig at a wake. There was none of that formality and ceremonious behaviour that we see sometimes so quaintly enforced

in German villages—where at the rustic dances the men scarcely ever open their lips, and directly each dance is over huddle together in one corner in a dark mass, like caged rats—but a hearty jovial devil-may-care spirit pervaded the company, young and old, that nothing could withstand.

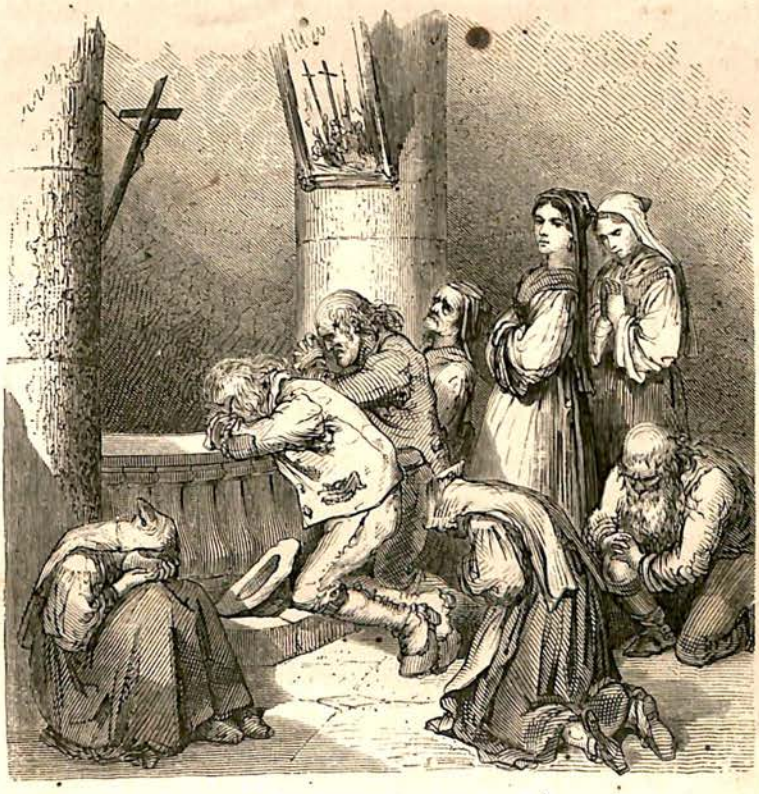
There was certainly something catching in the music; simple though it seemed, that stirred the performers to an amount of energy that was almost foreign to their nature (reminding us in its influence of the Spanish 'bolero,' that mysterious dance-music that acts as a charm on those who come within its influence), and which resulted in several heavy falls which we could not always see for the crowd, but which we were made aware of by a crashing sound, and by the shouts of laughter which greeted each downfall.

There were other sports and amusements at Larens that day, but they were chiefly what we see at any fête in France, the favourite ones being 'roundabouts,' and shooting at effigies of popular characters; but the majority of the performers being clad in the familiar nineteenth-century costume,[1] gave it more the appearance of a fair in the Faubourg St. Denis.

Let us here say a few words about the language and music of the people that inhabit these valleys.

[1] In the next sketch, at a shrine in the old church at Larens, we see nearly all the characteristic costume left amongst the people; in a very few years, we venture to say, no such group will be found.

In a little book on the 'Art of Travel,' which contains valuable hints to pedestrians on the mountains,



the traveller is naïvely recommended, on all occasions, to enter into conversation with the wayfarers he meets, as one of the greatest sources of enjoyment and instruction. Presupposing that the traveller knows something, at least, of the language of the country through which he journeys, the writer says:—

"Your peasant companion will tell you about the old ruin that crowns the height above his village, and some story connected with it not to be found in the chronicles. You may gather from his talk the records of local feeling; the certainty of a firm belief in an ancient superstition—a remnant, may be, of heathen time, and prevalent only in that neighbourhood—or he will relate all the details of some world-stirring event in which he or his father was an actor. From another you get an account of some grand natural phenomenon—a landslip, or an inundation—and his relation, with its natural earnestness and dramatic power, will have a charm that fixes your attention, and makes you feel sorry when the tale is ended."

This is true enough, as our travelled readers well know, and few of us leave our native land without some knowledge of the language of the country we are going to visit. But in the Pyrenees this is not so easy, for there is one language for the mountains, and another for the plains, of France. Those of our countrymen (and we have heard of many) who, coming here for the first time, had fondly hoped that a tolerable knowledge of French, which had served them well in many lands, would at least have stood them in good stead in the Pyrenees, have found themselves very much mistaken.

The language spoken by the peasantry in the Val d'Ossau, and that of the Béarnais, differs so widely

from modern French, that it is not until some time has been spent amongst the people that the ear becomes accustomed to the unusual sounds, and detects the similarities that really exist. Every day this distinction is becoming less marked, as railways bring the people more into contact, and in the neighbourhood of the large towns a language is growing into use partly French, partly Béarnais, partly Basque, and partly Spanish.

The Béarnais cling to their old customs with an almost childish faith, and believe in the purity of their language, and in its musical and expressive power. They say of it, perhaps with justice, that

'Comme la langue Espagnole et sa sœur l'Italienne,
Seules la Béarnaise et la Languedocienne
Sont faites pour se mesurer,
De prendre le haut vol qu'un autre s'avise
Au Béarnais pour prier, pour aimer et bénir,
Rien ne se peut comparer.'

We will now give an example of one of their popular airs, which have been handed down through several generations, and which are possibly the sources of some 'modern' French songs. The following, which is both characteristic and curious, may have suggested to the minds of later composers, the familiar 'Jeanette and Jeanot,' or even the patriotic 'Partant pour la Syrie.'

ADIÜ LA BÈRE MARGOUTOU.

ADIEU LA BELLE MARGOTON.

Béarnais.

Adiü la Bère Margoutou !
Tu bas perdé toun serbidou !
Jou baü party,
Per lou Rey serby.
Maüdite sie la guerre !
Dens sas amous
D'aüta malurous
N'ou'n badou sus la terre !

Dens moun estat, biby countén,
Nou mancabi d'or, ni d'argén,
Dé bèts chibaüs,
Dé richés cabaüs ;
Ségu dé ta tendresse . . .
Tout qu'ey pergut !
Lou sort m'ey cadut !
Moun Diü, quine tristesse !

Jou bé't aymi, bé't aymérèy,
Margoutou, tan qué jou biürèy ;
Si pouch quita,
Berleü haü tourna
Et pendén la campagne,
Si y a papè,
You t'escriürè
Deü houns dé l'Allemagne.

Qu'aüras récoumandatious,
Et noubelles dé mas amous ;
Toun noum aü cap
Et Pirre sinnat.
En lettres d'or l'addresse.
Y aura dessus :
" Taüs moüts sien renduts
A ma bère mestresse."

Si'm mori, bère Margoutou,
Aco sera deü maü d'amou
You'n soy countén ;
Et per testamén,
Bouy esta boutat en terre
Et sus lou clot,
Qué légen, Margot :
Ci-git moun amie Pierre.

Translation.

Adieu la belle Margoton !
Tu vas perdre ton serviteur !
Je vais partir
Pour servir le roi,
Maudite soit la guerre !
Dans ses amours
D'aussi malheureux
Il n'en naquit sur la terre.

Dans mon état je vivais content,
Je ne manquais ni d'or ni d'argent,
De beaux chevaux,
De riches réserves ;
Assuré de ta tendresse
Tout est perdu
Le sort m'en est échu !
Mon Dieu quelle tristesse.

Moi je t'aime, je t'aimerai
Margoton tant que je vivrai.
Si je puis quitter
Bientôt je vais revenir,
Et pendant la campagne
S'il y a du papier
Je t'écrirai
Du fond de l'Allemagne.

Tu auras des compliments
Et des nouvelles de mes amours,
Ton nom en tête
Et Pierre signé,
En lettres d'or l'adresse,
Il y aura dessus :
" Que ces mots soient remis
A ma belle maîtresse."

Si je meurs, belle Margoton,
Ce sera du mal d'amour
J'en suis content,
Et par testament,
Je veux être mis en terre,
Et sur la fosse
Qu'on lise Margot,
Ci-git mon ami Pierre.

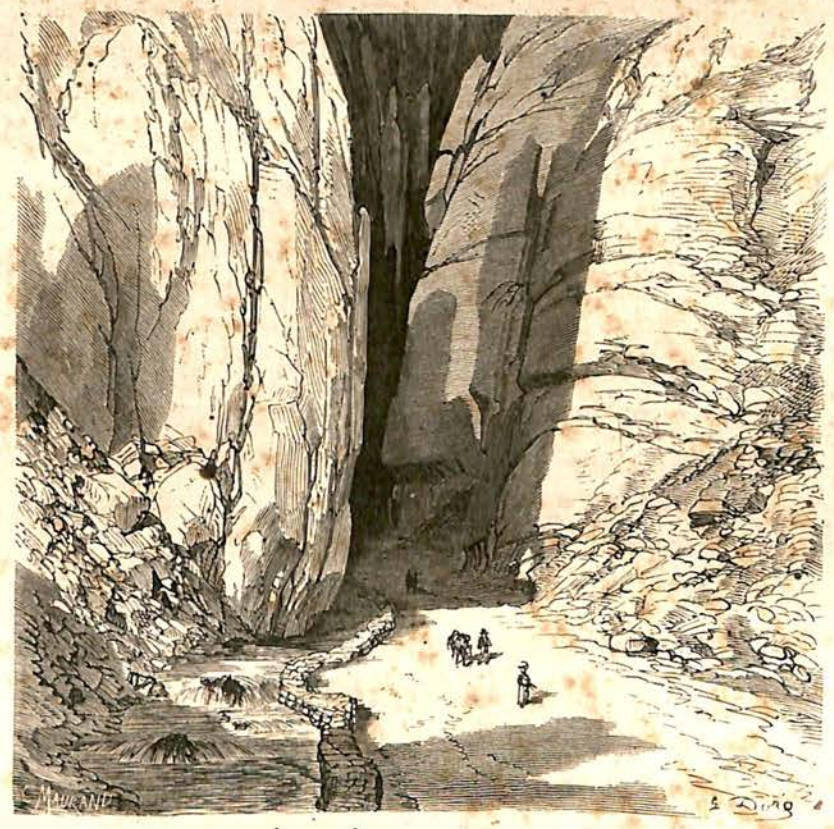
We were about to add from our own experience, that some of the sounds in the Béarnais dialect, and the words of their songs in the original patois, seem harsh and discordant after parisian French, and that, however well adapted for musical expression, there were certain syllables that grated upon our northern ears; but M. Taine here takes us by the button hole, and tells us the following little anecdote, apropos. Coming down a mountain one day with a party, in the Pyrenees, they heard voices behind them amongst the trees; doubtful as to who might be following, they listened attentively, and were soon enlightened.

'Nous entendons,' he says, 'un gloussement aigre, comme d'une poule étranglée, et nous reconnaissons la langue Anglaise!'

Leaving Larens, and parting with most of our companions, for nearly every one goes to Eaux Bonnes, we traverse an open space where the marks of the overflow of the torrent (which we cross by a fine stone bridge), and the débris brought down by storms, are everywhere apparent, we come into quite a corner at the end of the valley.

How, in old times, visitors to 'Les Eaux' ever managed to scramble up the precipitous sides of the mountain before us, and by what means invalids were carried thither for the benefit of the waters, seems at first sight extraordinary; but when we examine the head of the valley more closely we can understand

how the mountaineers of those days, following by habit or instinct the courses of the streams that come down on either side, made their way by more circuitous routes. Thanks to the enterprise of M. Boura, a native engineer, they now approach Eaux Bonnes by a fine broad road cut in the face of the rock by a

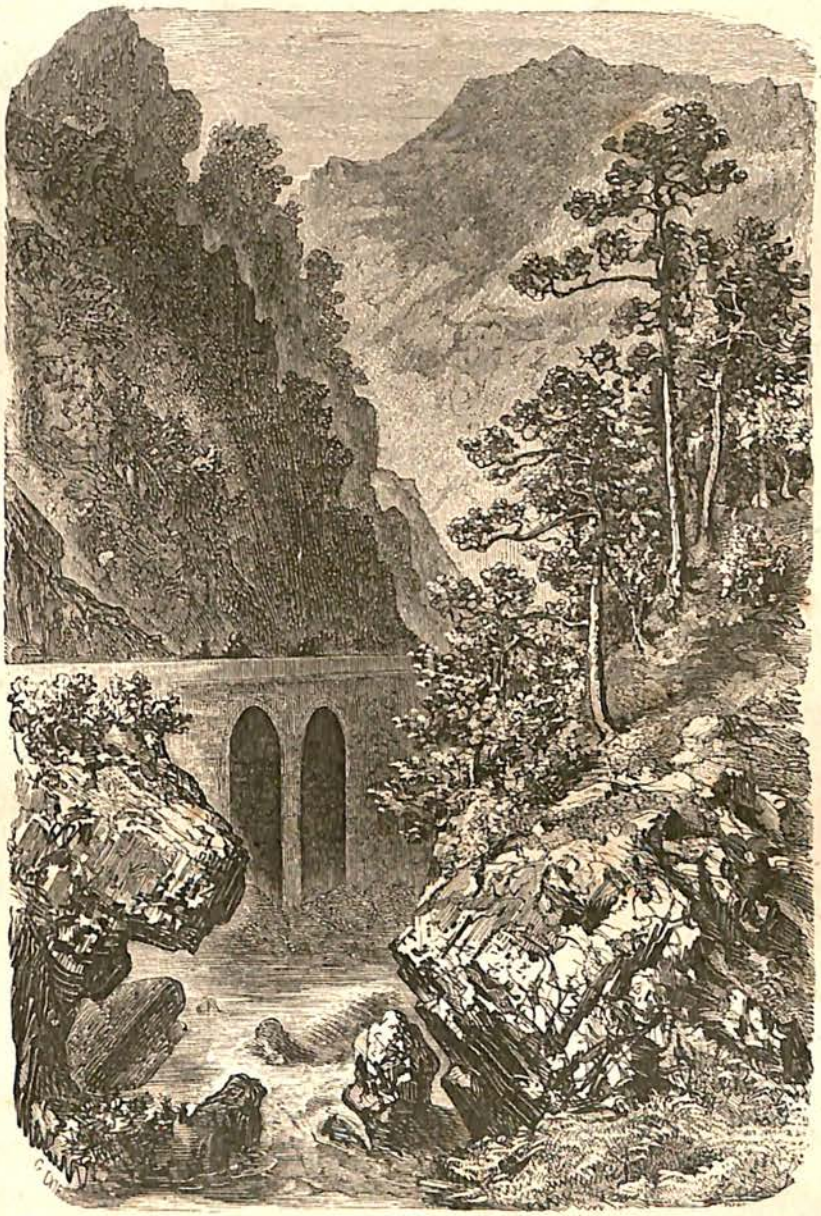


ROUTE TO EAUX-CHAUDES.

series of easy zigzags, which command fine views down the valley.

At a short distance after commencing the ascent, the road divides and we turn to the right, through a wild and narrow gorge that leads to Eaux Chaudes. Through the dark and gloomy portals we slowly ascend by a smooth and admirably constructed road, which was completed in 1847. In many places it has been made by blasting rock on both sides, making an opening just wide enough for the road, and for the torrent, which here confined between two walls comes down with fearful velocity. At one point the road has had to be built up against the side of the rock like a bridge, to allow the torrent which falls from a height of several hundred feet, to pass *under* it, and so join the Gave, the main stream that runs into the valley, called here the 'Gave de Gabas.'

Soon after passing this bridge the valley opens out, as we see in the illustration. The sides of the mountains, which are upwards of 2000 feet high, are covered with trees, excepting where torrents have laid them bare, and convulsions of nature, or the work of man, have detached huge masses of limestone into the Gave. The valley, although wider and more open on the high ground, is still narrow near the road, for the mountains almost meet at their base, and all the way to Eaux Chaudes, a distance of about three miles, there is little to be seen besides the road and the Gave, and the mountain sides. About an hour after leaving Larens we see before us a little smoke or



ROUTE TO EAUX CHAUDES.

steam curling up in the still air, which we first take to be a woodman's fire, but which in reality rises from Eaux Chaudes.

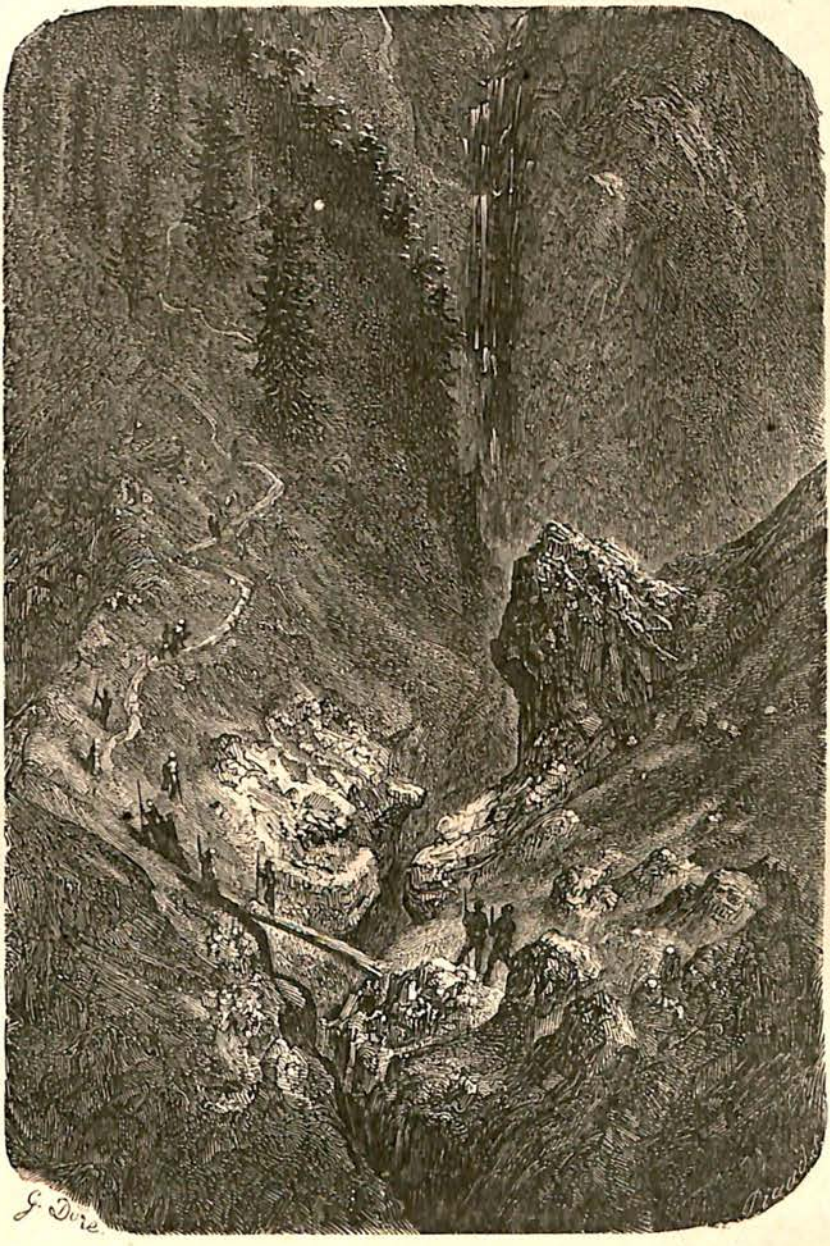
In a little corner, on the right bank of the Gave, where the mountain sides are almost perpendicular on the east, or right bank, and the river roars below on the west; at a point where from a mixed bed of granite and limestone the hot sulphurous springs burst forth, we find Eaux Chaudes, consisting of a little street of poorly built houses, two or three hotels, and a handsome marble 'Etablissement des Bains.' The latter is built on a platform almost overhanging the torrent, it has a large hall or pump-room, and promenade, fitted up with seats and stalls for the sale of all kinds of knicknacks; there are a number of private baths, and accommodation for patients suffering from rheumatism and other ailments, who are under the care of a resident physician. There are people sitting in a little garden trimly laid out, in front of the 'Etablissement,' and others walking about with tumblers, going through a course of the waters; following the routine of the last three hundred years, since the time when the bishop of Oloron, Chancellor of Béarn and Foix, first established here a 'maison d'habitation,' by order of Henry of Navarre.

The situation of Eaux Chaudes is so confined that every square yard of space has had to be built upon

and utilised, and at the side of one of the hotels a little terrace or promenade has been constructed almost over the Gave. On this the 'administration' have planted trees and placed seats, and it is between this spot and the Etablissement that the valetudinarian, who is not robust enough to clamber up the mountains, has to alternate and to spend his days, varied only by a drive up the valley to Gabas, or down by the route we have just come.

If there is a gloomy and deserted appearance about Eaux Chaudes, even on a fine summer's afternoon, when the sun, which only shines upon the town for a few hours, is lighting up the trees above our heads with that peculiar and brilliant golden green, that tinges orange groves in the setting sun; when the cattle are returning from the high pastures and the tinkle of bells is heard in every direction, and the visitors, perhaps a hundred, are moving about in their confined area; what must it be like when the clouds come down, as they do nearly every other day, and completely shut the inhabitants off from all view, either of the sky, or of the route up or down the valley, or when the roar of the wind is added to that of the torrent?

It has been frequently urged in guide-books that it is better for travellers to take up their quarters here, than at Eaux Bonnes, but after repeated visits to both we decidedly recommend the latter, and we have



ENVIRONS OF EAUX CHAUDES.

seldom met with people who were not of the same mind. Eaux Chaudes is cheaper, and is not overwhelmed with the 'haut monde,' but it is situated in a gloomy, thorough draught.

The environs are wild and beautiful in the extreme, and it is to explore these at leisure, to sketch the valley from different points, to examine the extraordinary stratifications of granite and limestone, to mark the traces of extinct glaciers, to collect fossils or wild-flowers, to fish in the Gave, or to hunt the izzard, (each one according to his taste) that this valley especially recommends itself for a lengthened visit.

The finest excursion is up the valley, southwards, past Gabas, a little hamlet five miles from Eaux Chaudes, to the 'Plateau de Bioux Artiques,' three miles further, from which we obtain a magnificent view of the Pic du Midi d'Ossau, that famous mountain (9800 feet high) that we had almost forgotten, so shut in have we been since leaving Pau. There is a good carriage road to Gabas, and the valley, notwithstanding its height, and the sterile aspect of the gorge we have just left, is one of the most varied and beautiful in the Pyrenees. As the valley opens out again we see the sides of the mountains covered with green pastures and wild-flowers. There are beech and oak trees sheltering patches of cultivated ground, cattle feeding on the slopes, and women working in the fields, as in the Val d'Ossau;

many of the more distant peaks are soft in outline, with the luxuriant growth of the box tree, which also fringes the rocks where the cascades come down, and often conceals them from view.

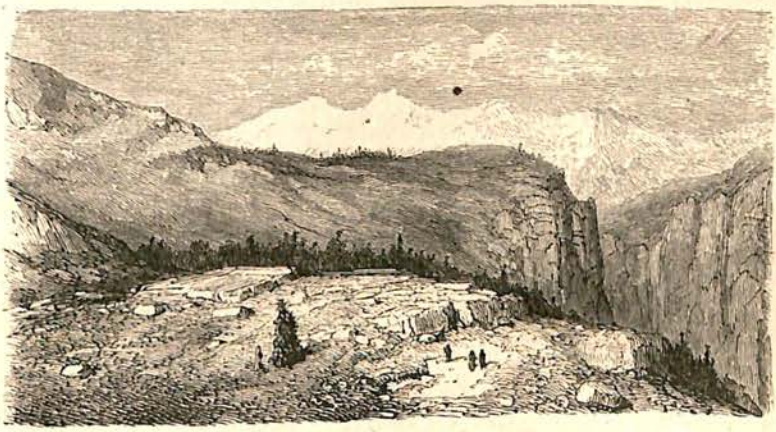
Gabas itself is a lonely little hamlet, the last on the French side of the Pyrenees, a halting place for travellers, and for the carriers who pass here on their way into Spain. Sometimes we may see, resting under the trees, upwards of fifty Spanish muleteers, and in the fine summer weather, many travellers coming over from Panticosa on mules, to avoid the circuitous, and expensive route, by St. Sebastian. There are Spanish ladies, seated in chairs, on mule-back, propped up by cushions, travelling most comfortably in this fashion, accompanied by their children and servants; the journey from Panticosa to Eaux Chaudes being thus accomplished in one day.

At Gabas the road divides, the path to the left leading to Panticosa, that to the right to the 'Plateau de Bioux Artiques,' where, in an hour and a half after leaving Gabas, we obtain the view of the Pic du Midi, which it is said, is worth coming all the way from England to see. The path leading up to this plateau is lined with fir trees, and on every side there are marks of the ravages of storms, that sweep down this valley with terrible force. In some places the mountain sides have been cleared of the timber by fire, or the trees have been felled for use, and the

lopped trunks hurled into the torrent below, to float down the Gave into the plain.

In three hours we can reach the base of the Pic du Midi itself, but the view is scarcely as fine as from the plateau, where its 'forked' ridge is seen to the best advantage.

The stern, cold appearance of this part of the valley, with its grey rocks and forests of pines, is relieved by the beautiful purple iris, that sheds a



ABOVE GABAS.

bloom over the lower slopes of grass, and by occasional patches of snow in the crevices of the rocks.

We were naturally anxious to ascertain something about the bears that are said to inhabit the Val d'Ossau, but we could ascertain very little; the people

are very fond of getting up an expedition to hunt them, but our guide, who was born in this valley, confessed that he had never seen a bear.

Returning towards evening to Eaux Chaudes, the workmen who are busy constructing a stone bridge over the river, in place of the old wooden *Pont d'Enfer*, are leaving their work and crowding into the town. There are, perhaps, fifty of them, masons and labourers from the valley, and as they go they sing and shout at the top of their voices, awakening the strange echoes of the valley with their songs. What they sing, and how they can find amusement or pleasure, in such uncouth sounds, especially, when assembled on the terrace in the evening they favour us with the whole of their repertoire, was a matter for wonderment, and in truth we often wished them further. But one becomes accustomed to everything, and in a few days we looked upon these evening concerts as part of our life at 'Les Eaux.' The chorus of one song, often repeated, and dinned into our ears ad nauseam, ran thus:—

'Les tailleurs de pierre
Sont de bons enfans;
Ils ne mangent guère,
Mais ils boivent longtemps!'

* * *

There was neither rhyme, nor melody, in most of them, and some, indeed, seemed rather 'broad,' to

unaccustomed ears, but they were vigorous and characteristic—free, gallic, and hearty, and better than all the songs of Thérésa.

Later in the evening, the services of the blind fiddler (whose portrait M. Doré has painted for us) being retained, rustic dances are improvised. Several young men and girls stand up, and at first the dance is very grave and measured, a Louis Treize minuet, led astray at Laruns; then a lively step, the famous 'saut basque,' and at last the veritable 'branle,' a romp in which all take part, such as we have already seen at Laruns.

We had very comfortable quarters at the Hôtel de France, at Eaux Chaudes, but we did not spend much time within doors in fine weather; and life here, was, we need hardly say, very uneventful.

We remember on a former occasion, on our way down the valley, stopping to dine at this hotel; we had been rambling in the mountains, and were without luggage and almost without purse, having (as Englishmen often do) left our effects at Eaux Bonnes; and after paying for our dinner, our united resources amounted to a franc and a half. As ill-luck would have it, a report came in that one of the

workmen on the road had been seriously injured by the fall of some rocks, and a subscription was at once set on foot for his family. A paper was made out and handed to all at the table, many giving ten, and most five or six, francs each. The two Englishmen were left to the last, and a handsome gift was evidently expected. The position was not a little embarrassing, for the case was really a hard one, and the liberality of the company undoubted. However, there was nothing for it but to contribute our mite, and pocket the odium.

The subscription-list was afterwards handed to a lady at the head of the table, who read out to the assembled company, the donors' names and the amounts subscribed. When it came to our turn, and 'M. M. ——, 1 fr. 50 c.' was announced, every one's countenance fell, traditional French politeness gave way under the strain, and the liberality of 'les Anglais' was made the subject of the freest and most open comment we ever experienced in a mixed assembly. 'Oh mon Dieu, ces misérables! soixante quinze par personne!' 'Trois pauvre petits enfants —cinquante centimes, chaque!' It got into the papers afterwards, but we were out of harm's way, up amongst the mountains again, fitter company for bears!

This event must have been a 'godsend' at Eaux Chaudes, for the visitor's, or the invalid's day even

in the finest weather, is monotonous enough. There is the usual dreary round of bathing, drinking the waters, reading old newspapers, promenading, dining, and perhaps dancing a little in the evening, that we shall meet with continually in our journeys through the Pyrenees; but so little love for the mountains or interest in the beauties of Nature, do we find amongst the *habitués* of the place (some of whom have come every season for years) that we wonder how such an existence can be endured.

For ourselves we can only say that most of our days at Eaux Chaudes were (to use a paradox) generally spent out of it. So shut in did we feel by the huge mountain walls, that it was a positive relief to go somewhere every day, if only as far as Laruns, to catch a glimpse of some distant horizon, to breathe in space, and to see a field again.

Then on summer nights, when the mountains seemed almost to close over us, and every sound was echoed with wonderful distinctness through the valley; when the murmuring of the Gave, the tinkle of bells, the cries of shepherds, and the bleating of flocks in front of our open windows, continued almost incessantly through the night, we have sometimes wished for a little more peace; and could sympathise with an imaginative Parisian who (transported in a few hours from his beloved Boulevards, to a shelf of granite two thousand feet above the sea) used to

dream that he was sleeping on the edge of some precipitous cliff, with the stars above him, and the sea roaring at his feet.

'PROMENADE HORIZONTALE.'

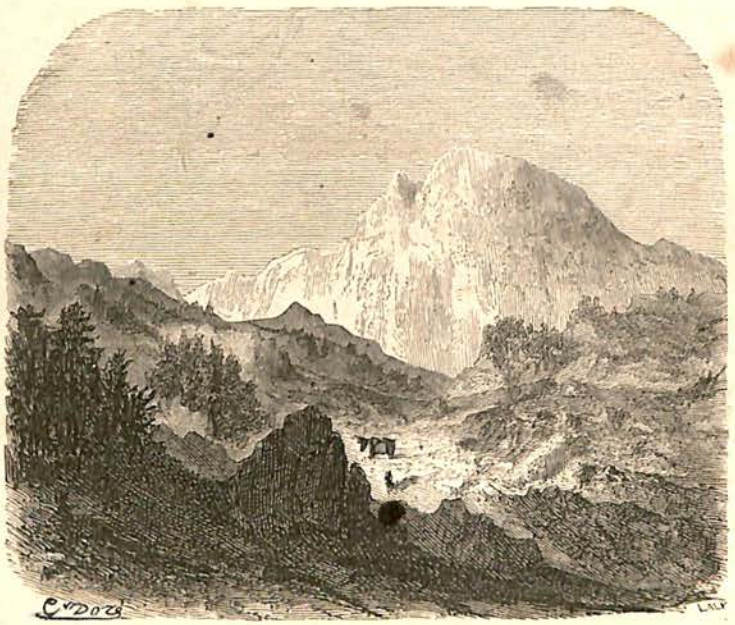
CHAPTER IV.

EAUX BONNES.

THE distance from Eaux Chaudes to Eaux Bonnes by the road, is not more than five miles, and there is constant communication by carriages and diligences during the summer months; but on the path over the Col de Gourzy, the mountain that separates us from Eaux Bonnes (6000 feet high), we obtain such splendid views, that it is the route to be recommended for riding or walking, although rather rough and steep.

By the high road, we return down the valley, nearly to Laruns, and then, turning southwards again, commence ascending the fine road that we mentioned in the last chapter. The way is steep and slow for horses, but if we get out and cut off the zigzags by scrambling up the narrow paths, or make a détour to see the 'Grotto of Bears,' or the once famous 'Belvidere Fanny,' we shall yet arrive at our destination long before the carriages.

As we keep ascending, the view of the valley becomes more beautiful and forms a fresh picture at almost every turn of the road, and our attention is so entirely fixed upon what is passing below, where we can just



distinguish the figures of the peasantry arriving at, and leaving, Laruns, that we have scarcely once looked upwards. What is it that we see immediately overhead? What are those little specks of red and white moving amongst the trees far above us? They are the picquets, or outposts, of a 'high civilisation' to which we must now introduce the reader.

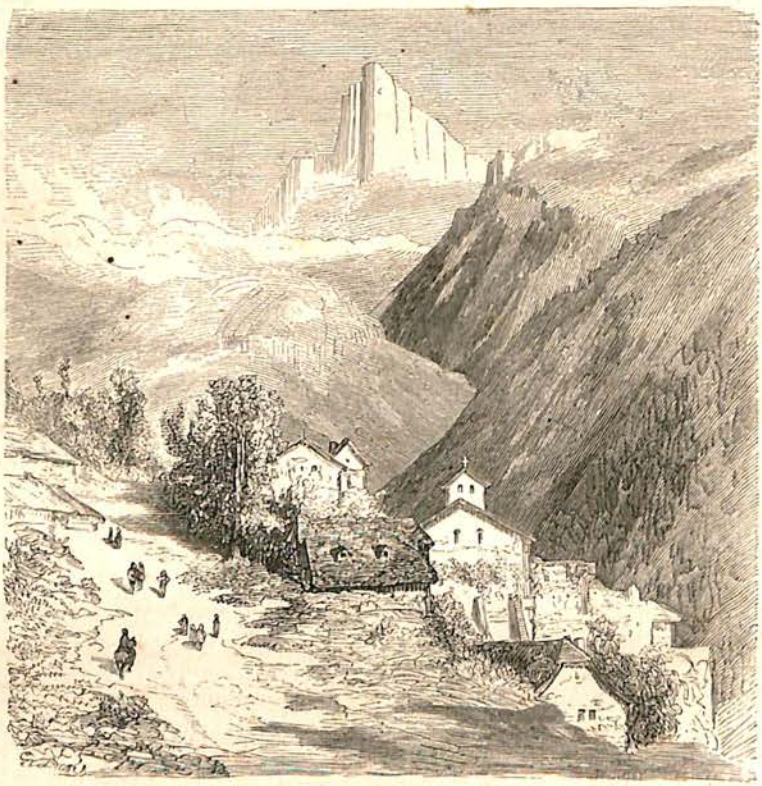
A few more turns in the ascent, and we can distinguish people riding or walking, first by twos and threes, then a crowd. Where do they come from? We can see no sign of a town—nothing but the valley below and a few yards of the road, now neatly swept and railed off like the drive in a private park. We are no longer in the country; we are 'en promenade.' 'Je comptais trouver ici la campagne,' writes M. Taine, 'je rencontre une rue de Paris, et les promenades du Bois de Boulogne!' We were of course somewhat prepared for this, but not altogether for the extraordinary sight that burst upon us on turning the road once more, and coming suddenly upon Eaux Bonnes.

Here in a cleft in the mountain-side, overhung and overshadowed by rocks and trees, is this famous, fashionable little hotel-village, consisting of about fifty houses, and giving accommodation in the season to a thousand people.

On an area of not much more than half an acre, the ingenious founders of this little town have managed to lay out a 'Place' with trees and fountains, and two rows of hotels and pensions on either side, forming what is called the Grande Rue. At the upper end, built into the rock, is the Thermal Establishment, with its courtyards and promenades for bathers, and near it, a little church. One or two streets lead out wherever a nook and cranny could be found for them.

One is called the Rue des Cascades, and another, which resembles nothing so much as the space of a narrow slice cut out of a cake, is dignified with the name of Rue de Cauterets.

In whichever direction we turn there are houses



THE PIC DE GER, FROM AAS.

built into, and often forming part of, the mountain, resting on ledges of rock, like the eyries; but so

cleverly contrived is the arrangement of the place, so admirably has space been economised, that there is a feeling of freedom about it, quite inconsistent with living in a bird's-nest.

Thus with the mountains several thousand feet above our heads, and the Val d'Ossau stretching away for many miles at our feet, with rocks overhanging and tree-tops waving below through which we can see the blue sky—with scarcely a foot of level ground anywhere (save the 'Promenade Horizontale,' of which we shall speak presently), with cascades and waterfalls almost at our windows, we find ourselves as comfortably and luxuriously housed as in any modern city.

As we drove up to the door of the Hôtel de France, we were blocked several times by a crowd on foot and on horseback, and in the gardens, or 'Place,' in front of the hotels, there were at least a hundred and fifty people making holiday after the manner of their respective nations.

Looking down upon the Place from our hotel window on this bright sunny afternoon, it is the gayest scene imaginable; and we scarcely know which to admire most, the costumes of the fair riders who about this hour (five P.M.) come flocking in, dressed in white riding-habits and scarlet hats; or their cavaliers in buff and green, like members of the 'Ancient Order of Foresters;' or their dandy guides, in embroidered Spanish costumes, silk sashes, and

white stockings; or the gay trappings of their thin steeds; or the motley group that stand about to see the arrivals. This last comprises every Parisian *fantaisie* and extravagance in attire, brought up here in those huge 'noah's-ark' boxes, that are the 'bêtes noires' of all occupants of the diligence banquette—bright plumage for the inhabitants of our little nest—strange importation into the Vale of Bears!

The noise and bustle in the square,—instruments playing more discordant music than any Italian organs, the squeaks and rattles of juvenile civilisation the chattering of their *bonnes*, the incessant ringing of bells, the shouts and cracking of whips, the voices of different nations—all confined within a limited space, and echoed back from the surrounding rocks, can scarcely be conceived.

But everything is sunshine, politeness, and apparent gaiety, 'la vie aux eaux;' a scene thoroughly unique, curious, and grotesque—'grotesque qu'un peu d'eau chaude ait transporté dans ses fondrières la cuisine et la civilisation!'

The cuisine is well provided, as we shall find presently if we join the company who are now assembling in the handsome salon of the hotel for the table d'hôte. They consist principally of French people; there are a few Spaniards, and fewer English, Germans, and Russians. The English are in a decided minority at Eaux Bonnes, as elsewhere in the Pyrenees, and are,

to tell the truth, not too popular. The ruddy English face does not command universal sympathy and attention here, as in Switzerland, even amongst the class most open to impressions—waiters, servants, and guides. For once (and perhaps it is good for us) we do not have everything our own way.

The table is laid for about eighty people, and sixty or seventy sit down. The French—the habitués ('pensionnaires')—occupy one end, nearest the head of the table. They are elegantly dressed, courteous, and well bred, evidently belonging to the upper classes of society; in fact, were we to mention the names of some assembled to-day, they would be familiar in the diplomatic and literary circles of several European capitals. That M. Fould is here, is a fact considered worthy of large type in the local papers, with the intelligence that 'chaque matin il vient en calèche comme un simple mortel, prend son bain, déjeûne et s'en retournerait à la fin de la saison avec une nouvelle jeunesse!' Next to the French sit the Spaniards, who are also well dressed but far less talkative; then there is a hiatus, with the English, Americans, Germans (and Russians, if any), and 'casuals' at the bottom.

As we are a holiday party, and as we have brought all the latest Parisian fashions with us, our toilettes are not only handsome, but there is a distinguished air about the company which one rarely sees at an hotel

in France excepting at the capital; utterly different from those dreary and silent table-d'hôtes in the provinces, which are generally composed of English ladies and *commis-voyageurs*.

We are merry and noisy, we might almost say uproarious, in spite of nationalities, and the gaps in our ranks. A wonderful clamour of plates and dishes, snatches of conversation, lively sallies across the table, disjointed accounts of 'ascensions' more or less exciting according to the style of the narrator, a rather peculiar manner of eating, and an unparalleled consumption of vin ordinaire, is roughly, what is passing at the further end of the table. The Spaniards who occupy the centre, with an aristocratic solidity peculiarly their own, make great havoc with the viands, and lose no time in conversation. They have come with their families to spend the hot months at Eaux Bonnes and to drink the waters; and prove, as far as our experience goes, much more pleasant and genial travelling companions when out of their own country.

We said that they did not converse much, but we must make exception in favour of one delightful little man, about whom the reader will pardon us for saying a few words, because he is a type of the Spanish butterfly that we shall often meet in our journey through the Pyrenees. It has been our lot to meet him in many lands, but, wherever met, always devot-

ing himself to one object, and that object, female beauty. Whether at Homburg or Baden, at Paris or Biarritz, or on the banks of lake Leman (where he was the pride and ornament of the 'hotel of the beautiful shore'), superbly dressed, an accomplished linguist, a perfect musician, skilled at croquet, equally at home with Russian countesses, brewers' daughters, and American maidens—amusing, volatile, rich, and happy.[1]

Here, at Eaux Bonnes, by art or accident, he is seated, as usual, opposite to the prettiest girl in the salon, and is making the most of his opportunity. He has no time to lose, for when the cold winds come, he will be off with the swallows to the south of Spain; but he will return—we shall see him again in the *Avenue de l'Europe* at the Paris Exhibition of 1867.

Our own part of the company is, we fear, scarcely so brilliant in appearance, or so fluent in French, nevertheless we are sociable enough. There are grave 'patres familiarum' who are here with their families, for the benefit of the waters, and who particularly dislike them; one or two members of the Alpine

[1] He was one of those birds of rare plumage and mysterious origin that flutter for a time round the court of Madrid,—basking in the sunshine of present prosperity. A little while (even whilst we write, the clouds seem gathering) and the crash must come, when the dust will be dashed from these butterflies' wings, and Baden and Luchon will know them no more.

Club, who have 'come down' to Eaux Bonnes[1] for a change, and entertain us with accounts of their guides, who seem to be a peculiarly lazy race, and soon 'knock up,' as the saying is; London physicians, taking a brief but vigorous holiday, forgetting appointments, breathing the free air of unpunctuality, and revelling in a suit of tweed; a few ordinary tourists, and the two English ladies that we meet almost everywhere in Europe, travelling together. We had almost forgotten an American gentleman at the lower end of the table, who entertained us with his views upon sovereignty, explaining to a Russian next to him, that reigning, having lost all sanctity and prestige, had become 'one of the open professions;' and we had also nearly omitted to mention that, to add to the concert of voices, we were favoured during dinner with the most discordant sounds. A blind fiddler (our old enemy from Eaux Chaudes), was led into the room, and obliged us with several excruciating 'morceaux.'

It is now past seven o'clock, and most of our party have dispersed, the majority betaking themselves to the 'Promenade Horizontale.' This walk, which we will call by the less prosaic title of the Lady's Mile, is a perfectly level and smooth promenade cut round the mountain side for nearly half a mile, and is the only

[1] Less enterprising mountaineers consider that they have already come *up* to it!

The sultry summer day is done,
The western hills have hid the sun,
But mountain peaks still rising higher,
Retain reflection of his fire.'

level ground at Eaux Bonnes. It is lined for some distance with little shops and stalls, where bright-coloured Spanish wools, trinkets, and toys are sold, where bagatelle and *tir au pistolet*, roundabouts and peep-shows—all the 'fun of the fair' in fact, is set out for the amusement of idle Eaux Bonnes. From the seats placed at intervals on this wonderful platform the views down the valley, northwards, are most beautiful, with the little villages like specks in the distance, and the town of Laruns spread out in the shape of a cross at our feet.

As soon as it is dark the stalls and little wooden shops are lighted up, and promenading continues until about nine o'clock. The evenings are cold by contrast—colder than anything we have yet experienced, and many retire to the salons of the hotels, or to a little 'café chantant' in a hole cut in the rock, or to hear Levassor, the veteran Parisian *comique*. There is a Cabinet de Lecture, but there are not many readers, and a Casino, which is also rather thinly attended.

The little square in front of the hotels is full of people, who assemble in the evening with their families, to hear a band that we have already heard too often; there are a great many guides and couriers sauntering about, and considerable interest seems to be taken in an expedition to hunt the izzard, which is to take place to-morrow.

But it is not until later in the night, when Eaux Bonnes has gone to sleep, that we can appreciate the

beauty of our mountain home, when the universal hubbub has subsided, and we can hear for the first time the sound of innumerable cascades, and the rustle of invisible tree-tops in the evening breeze; when the smoke from this great seething kitchen has ceased to curl up the rocks, revealing the stars shining down with a brightness that we never see in the plains.

The weather seemed so favourable for seeing the mountains, that we determined to make our first excursion the very next day, intending, if possible, to ascend the Pic de Ger, the extraordinary conical mountain that we see in the illustration at page 108. With some difficulty, and at a high rate of pay, we had managed to obtain guides who would walk, and carry our provisions without extra porters to help them. Our chief guide prophesied a clear day for the excursion (which did not strike us as exhibiting much wisdom or foresight), adding that 'il faut profiter du temps' in this treacherous Val d'Ossau, for that 'there was no knowing what might happen.'

What did happen our readers may judge from the next illustration, and to what an unwelcome sound we awoke next morning—the sound of pattering of feet and the pattering of rain. Water everywhere—clouds resting upon the housetops, shutting off all view beyond our little square, and the brave army of invalids taking the waters.

Let us follow them to the 'Etablissement,' that we can just see through the rain, at the end of the street. It is a plain building of no architectural pretensions, which was once considered large, but is now quite inadequate to the requirements of Eaux Bonnes in the height of the season. Visitors complain loudly of want of accommodation, especially in bad weather, when they have to stand upon the damp ground to

wait their turn to drink the waters, and often find it difficult to get baths at the prescribed hours. There are three sulphurous springs that supply these baths, La Source Vieille, 88°, from which they drink, La Source Nouvelle, 86°, and La Source de la Douche, 91°.

Whether it be good for any one, especially those affected with pulmonary complaints (these waters being prescribed in the early stages of consumption), to stand about here in the damp, on these cold wet mornings, we will not stay to inquire, regretting only with our French friend that 'l'économie de l'administration suppose qu'il faisait toujours beau temps,' and does not provide for bad weather.

Both here and elsewhere in the Pyrenees, we shall find the Thermal Establishments far inferior in their interior

arrangements and management, to those on other parts of the Continent.

About ten o'clock we return to breakfast, and for an hour afterwards there is nothing to do on this wet morning but to listen to the German band, who,

'Il faut supporter la pluie et la musique aux Eaux Bonnes!'

prisoners like ourselves, take up their position in the salon of the principal hotel, and discourse most eloquent music.

At eleven, it being a Saint's Day, and the weather slightly clearing, there is a general movement to the chapel, which is also much too small for the wants of the visitors; many of whom have come from the village of Aas.

'Cette église,' says Taine, 'est une boîte ronde, en

pierres et en plâtre, faite pour cinquante personnes, où l'on en met deux cents. Chaque demi-heure entre et sort un flot de fidèles. Les prêtres malades abondent, et disent des messes autant qu'il en faut: tout souffre aux Eaux Bonnes du défaut d'espace, et on fait queue pour prier comme pour boire.'

Soon after noon, the cloud that had so completely encompassed us, disperses, and in half an hour has disappeared altogether. The streets and walks quickly dry up, and are again crowded with people. The day is too far advanced, and the weather too uncertain to make any long excursions, so that we may as well employ our time in looking about us a little, and observing a few of the peculiarities of 'Les Eaux.'

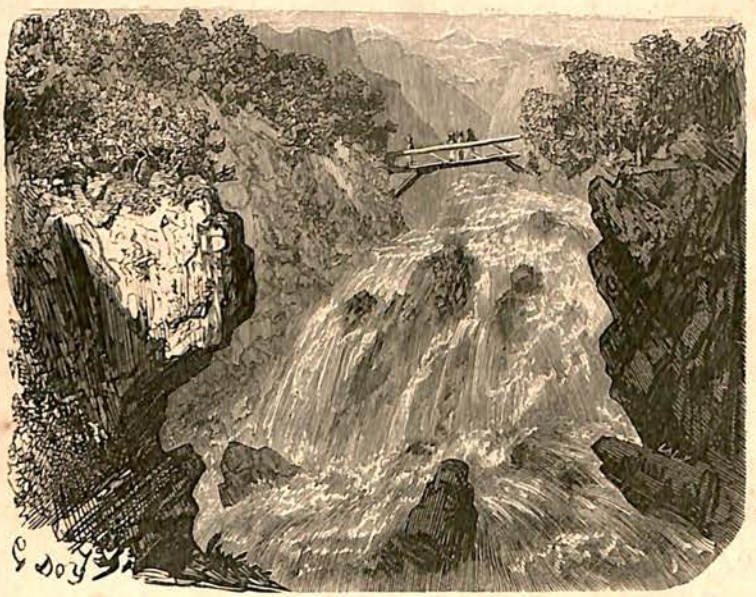
Everything, we notice, seems adapted for a long stay; people who come here are evidently expected to

remain for the season, and visitors who wish to see the chief places of interest and hurry off again, meet with various opposing forces. If you wish to take a bath, you have to pay an entrance fee of several francs; and are expected to subscribe for a 'course,' available for the season; at the Casino and reading-rooms the system is the same, and hotel prices are exorbitant by the day, but moderate by the week. To get a good mount you must hire your steed by the week or month, and take him, for better or for worse, for the season; and there are cascades to be viewed on the same principle.

We are all kept in good order here, everything is *en règle* and *au règle*, and if we stay a whole season, we need not be at a loss how to get through the days. It is all arranged for us; there is the particular promenade for the early morning facing the east, the exact spot where you are to walk (and no further) between the time of taking each glass of water, the after-breakfast cascade, the noon siesta, the ride at three, another cascade and more water, or a bath, at four, promenade at five, dinner at six, 'promenade horizontale' until eight, then the Casino,[1] balls,

[1] The 'Salon de Taverne,' is the favourite place of assembly, where; 'l'on vient sans façon, lire les journaux, et sous prétexte de travailler autour d'une table, causer, rire, faire ou écouter des cancans, pendant que les hommes s'escriment au whist, à l'écarté, à la bouillotte; et arrosées de quelque vers de sirops, faire des projets d'excursions pour le lendemain.

'société' écarté, or more moonlight walks—and then, decidedly early to bed.



There is no real difficulty in thus getting through the days, but, perhaps, after a few weeks, we may get a little tired of the routine; and this brings us to a delicate point to touch upon, the fact so tenderly dealt with by Frenchmen, that they, too, suffer from ennui. At Eaux Bonnes, and especially at Luchon, which we shall visit by and by, we shall find them surrounded with every luxury and refinement that money can purchase, every 'distraction' that ingenuity could devise, but the result is a failure, because

the French people do not care for mountains for their own sake, or take much interest in scenery.

How little the French people really know of the Pyrenees, beyond the walks round their favourite watering-place, can only be judged of by those who have met them on their travels, and conversed much with them on such subjects. If we were to relate what we have heard sometimes, we should hardly be credited, and perhaps the reader will scarcely believe that a well-educated Frenchman (who was in the habit of coming to Eaux Bonnes every summer), speaking of Gavarnie, said he had not been there, but understood that it was better worth seeing than anything in the Pyrenees, that it was celebrated for a Roman amphitheatre in remarkable preservation, and for the highest waterfall in Europe!

It has been said that the modern Parisian is 'too much at ease, too much protected, that his life is scattered about in too many little delicate sensations,' that he is unfitted either physically or mentally for a mountain life, and that the true zest for the enjoyment of nature is wanting in him. Whether this be quite true or not, there is no doubt that he suffers dreadfully from ennui. M. Taine admits the fact, and says:—

'Cet ennui prouve que la vie ressemble à l'Opéra; pour y être heureux il faut l'argent d'entrée, mais aussi *le sentiment de la musique.* Si l'argent vous

manque, vous restez dehors à la pluie parmi les décrotteurs; si le sentiment vous manque, vous dormez maussadement dans votre superbe loge.'

It is generally supposed, he goes on to say, that 'la vie aux Eaux' is very romantic, that one meets with adventures of all kinds, and above all '*aventures de cœur*' (whatever the latter may be), but he does not find it so, and is of opinion that if life here is a romance, it is only in books, and that 'great men' are more likely to be found, bound in calf in the travellers' portmanteaus.[1]

In spite of the theory that in society here, conversation is 'extrêmement spirituelle,' that one meets only 'artistes, hommes supérieurs, et les gens du grand monde,' that grace, elegance, and 'la fleur de tous les plaisirs,' flourish and abound, he finds the fact very different, and sums up the habits of visitors with the remark that they seem 'to wear a great many hats, to eat a great many peaches, and to talk "immensely," but that in the matter of men and ideas they differ little from the rest of the world.'

Another writer makes the following complaint about Eaux Bonnes—'Depuis que les chemins de fer, en rapprochant les distances, et en mettant les voyages à la portée d'un plus grand nombre de bourses, ont augmenté la clientèle des eaux minérales, un fait

[1] This last notion seems to us as fanciful as many others, for how many Frenchmen ever travel with books in their portmanteaus!

THE CASCADE DU VALENTIN.

singulier s'est produit, qu'il faut citer aussi: c'est la décadence du plaisir, et de la vie joyeuse à Bonnes: la foule y a remplacé l'ancienne société aristocratique.'

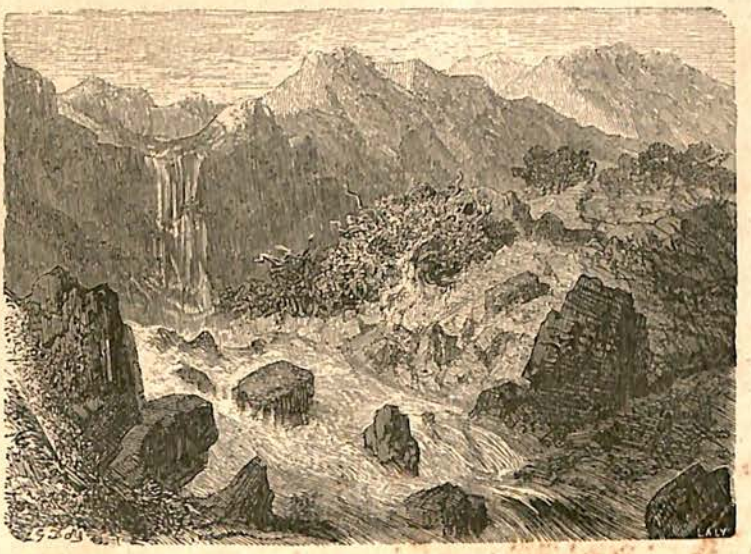
After this confession, the little English colony at Pau can hardly be accused of being too exclusive or select.

We have been to-day to see the 'Cascade du Valentin, and met plenty of people on the way thither. There is quite an assemblage at each of the favourite places of resort, and the roar of the waterfall cannot altogether drown the voices, or the orders for 'cognac' and 'sirops' at the little café which commands the best view. The draught of air rushes down with a chilling sensation, after walking in the sun, that renders it dangerous to sit long together in one spot; yet in spite of the cold and spray which falls like rain, we see several figures muffled up in cloaks, sketching the various points of interest.

These cascades, which Murray speaks of as 'the pretty but trifling waterfalls of the Valentin,'[1] have seldom, we believe, been depicted with more power of the pencil than in these drawings by M. Doré. He has succeeded in giving the variety of form and undulated surface, of this enormous mass of water,

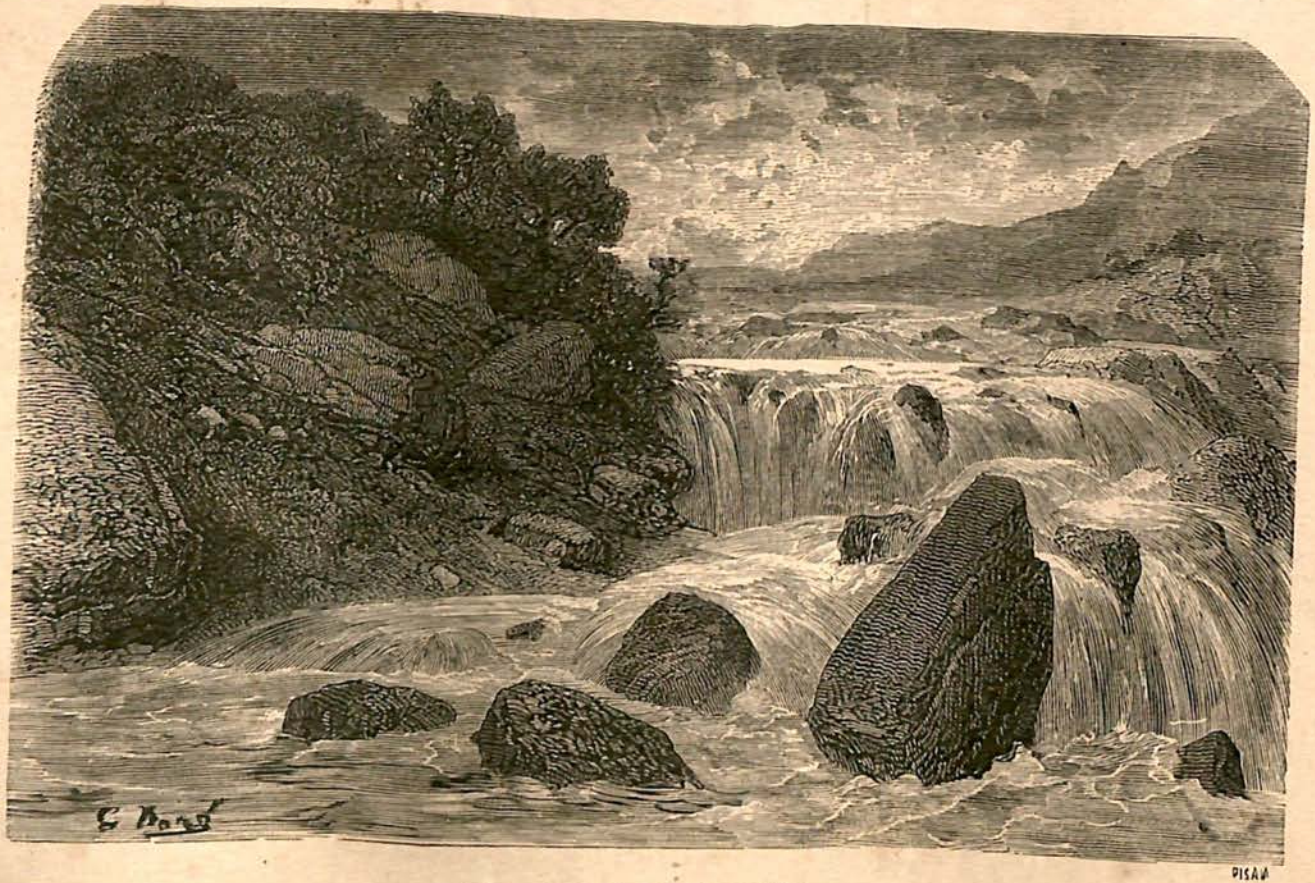
[1] Mr. Packe, in his 'Guide to the Pyrenees,' ignores them altogether, and in other respects, scarcely, as it seems to us, does full justice to the picturesque beauty of Eaux Bonnes.

as it forces its way through rocks and trees, now a broad and overwhelming cataract, now a pool of smooth water reflecting the branches of the over-hanging beech trees, now escaping again in a hundred different ways, bounding from rock to



rock, catching the sunshine in its course, and shedding prismatic colours on the rocks, now gathering its forces again, and roaring down into the valley far below, where we can trace it, a broad river, hurrying to the sea.

We are fortunate in seeing these cascades after rain, when they are, as the French visitors express it, 'en toilette;' for, after a continuance of dry

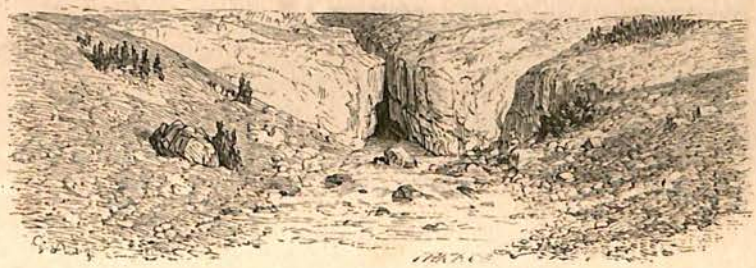


THE CASCADE DU VALENTIN.

weather, they become greatly diminished, and sometimes disappear altogether.

There are walks in the neighbourhood of Eaux Bonnes which extend for miles, one especially above the village, to the 'plateau de la montagne verte,' from which we obtain delightful views of the mountains and valleys. The paths are for the most part shaded by trees, and it is seldom that there is not a pleasant breeze stirring, even on the hottest day.

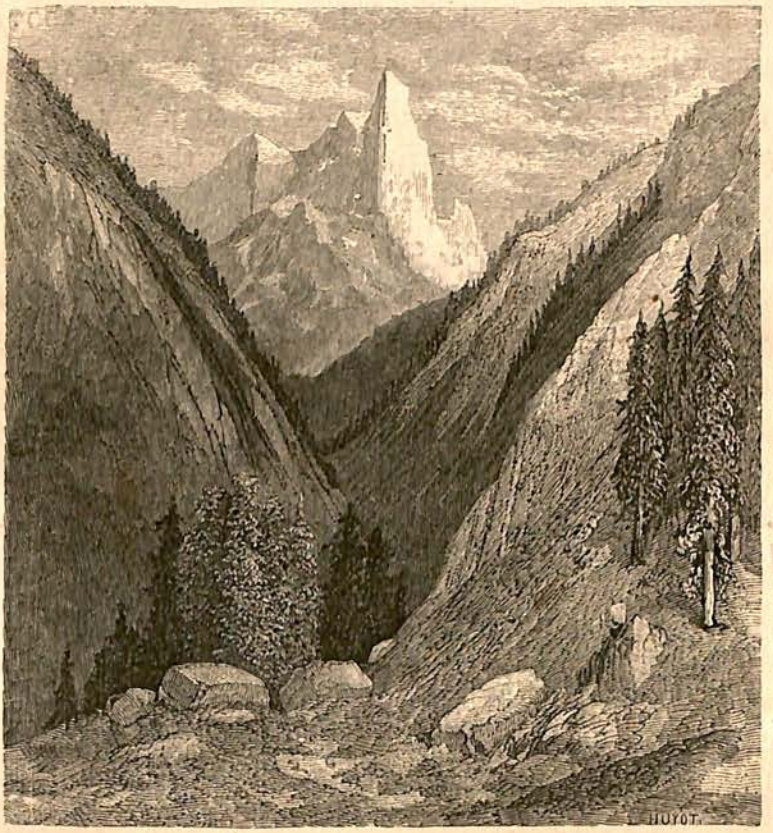
Those who are accustomed, like ourselves, to live in 'les prairies du nord,' will find even the fresh air of Eaux Bonnes too hot for them on a July day, when there is no wind, and will do well to escape



early in the morning to the heights above the town, where if fond of botany, they will find some beautiful specimens of wild flowers that are only to be met with in this, and the neighbouring valleys.

The finest excursion is without doubt to the Pic de Ger, which some of our party undertook on the

first fine day after our arrival. The following notes of the ascent may be interesting.[1]



THE PIC DE GER.

August 18.—'Up at 5 A.M., and having with some little difficulty selected the most soberly dressed and

[1] In this, and in two other instances, we have availed ourselves of a friend's notes, when they have had a particularly favourable day for ascending.

honest-looking guide from the crowds that danced, capered, smoked, and cracked their whips around us, we left at 5.30 A.M. for the Pic de Ger.'

'After winding over several meadows we crossed the Coume d'Aas, and descended through a forest of fir to a gap in the mountain, which the guide called the Col de Valeur. Hence, turning suddenly to the left, we began to scale the steep sides of the mountain to what looked like the top. Arrived there, we found another steep and rocky ascent before us, with a stony *arête* to cross. We toiled for another half-hour, until the top was reached at eleven A.M. The view was magnificent. The Pic du Midi d'Ossau was just in front, with hundreds of the peaks stretching in every direction, and Eaux Bonnes itself could just be seen, like a speck in a dark valley far beneath. A small lake was visible to the left; to the north lay the Jurançon and the table-land beyond Pau, and all around valleys and mountains—the snow-capped Vignemale rising above the rest. The height here is between 8000 and 9000 feet, and the view hence is said to be even finer than from the rival Pic du Midi d'Ossau.'

We have hitherto been speaking of Eaux Bonnes in its summer aspect, when it is crowded and gay, but the best time to see it, and to enjoy it, is in the fine settled weather that we often have towards the middle

of October, when all the little shops that lined the allées and promenades, are not only shut up, but have departed bodily, and been trundled down to Pau; when the rows of seats that command the best views are untenanted; when, in short, 'la vie' has departed, and there is only one hotel open for the solitary traveller—then, indeed, there is not a more pleasant or peaceful spot in which to spend the autumn days.

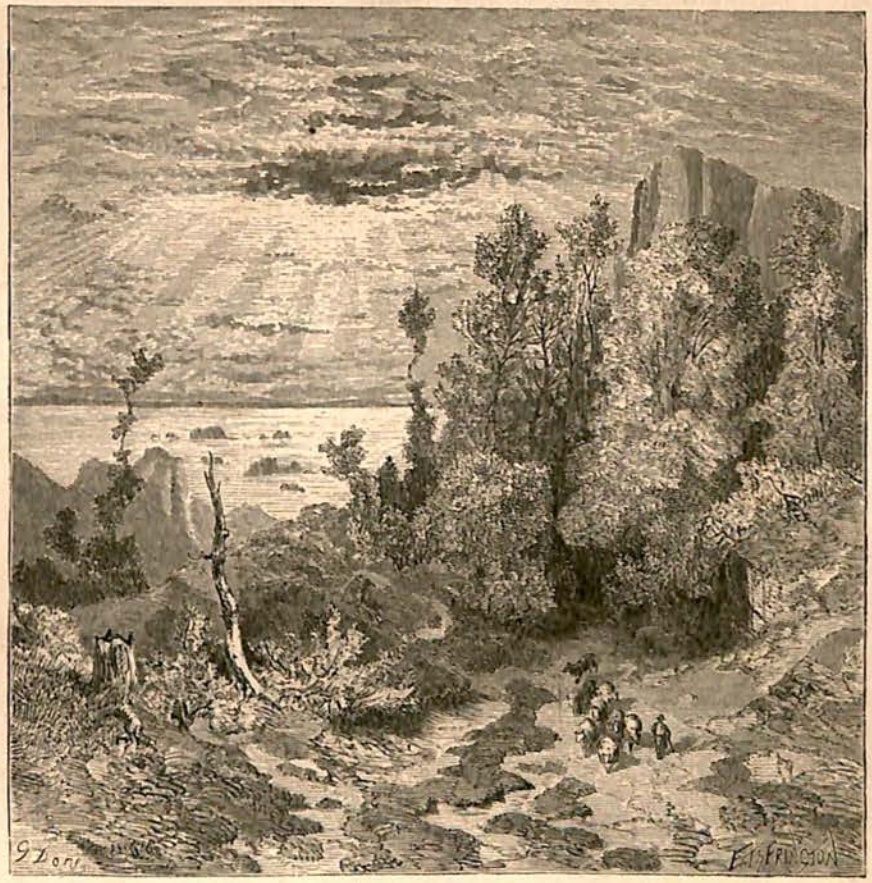
We were once at Eaux Bonnes towards the end of October, the weather was calm and fine, and warm enough for sketching out of doors without discomfort, and we remember sharing the hotel and the 'promenade horizontale' with one other visitor. He was a genial and accomplished Irishman, who had been staying here for some weeks, latterly quite alone, and in thorough enjoyment of the quiet of the place, —having come, as he said, to Eaux Bonnes for 'constitutional' reasons. He had brought with him a well-filled purse, a weak chest, and the burden of his country's wrongs, and had come out here to take 'a calm review of the home political situation,' on the principle, we presume, that, 'C'est loin du monde qu'on peut juger sainement des illusions dont il nous environne.' Sitting under the trees on the 'Promenade' he expatiated to us for hours on the iniquity of England, in not providing his country with capital to enable it to keep pace with other nations, admitting

at the same time that he spent most of his own wealth in other lands. So quaint and illogical was the reasoning, so curious was the mixture of earnestness and common sense with a sort of Quixotic romance, and so strange a contrast was he to all that had gone before, that he formed quite a feature in our recollection. The reader must pardon us if we seem to have been irrelevant—for as straws show the direction of the wind, so, if naturally and without forethought, we shall sometimes on our journey be found forgetting the mountains and turning our thoughts homeward, it is only a proof of that want of sustained interest in travelling in the Pyrenees, which in Switzerland never flags; we will not stay to analyse the subject now, perhaps the reason will explain itself before we reach our journey's end.

We fear that in this chapter, we have fallen unconsciously into the category of other writers, and have not done justice to Eaux Bonnes, for there is a charm about it both in summer and in autumn, that is undescribed and indescribable; an attraction altogether independent of any 'administration,' and for which we have to thank no French prefect.

Those of our readers who have paid more than a passing visit here, will, we believe, agree in the above; those who have not (which expression comprises the majority of our countrymen, and nearly all Americans who visit Europe) we would earnestly recommend

to come. The natural beauty of its situation, the forms of the surrounding mountains, the variety of interest in its walks, its evergreen aspect under a July sun—its refreshing waterfalls, its delightful air, and its everchanging and wondrous view—leave an abiding sense of beauty in the mind, long after the sounds of bells and whistles, and penny trumpets, the shouts and screams, and the perpetual *fanfare* of 'Johnny Crapaud' making holiday, have died away.



'Sweet day, so calm, so cool, so bright,
The bridal of the earth and sky;
The moon shall weep thy fall to-night—
For thou must die!'

CHAPTER V.

CAUTERETS.

WE must now pass over into another valley to the eastward, and see something of Cauterets, one of the most ancient and populous of the Pyrenean Spas.

There are two routes, the most direct being over the 'Col de Torte,' a steep path behind Eaux Bonnes to the Col, nearly 6000 feet above the sea, thence descending to Arrens and Argelez, at which latter place the high road is gained between Pau and Cauterets. This route when we last passed over it was steep and fatiguing for any but good walkers, and there were parts where it was scarcely safe to keep the saddle; but a road has lately been opened, which, avoiding the summit altogether, is carried round the mountain side by a very circuitous route (in some places being built up against the almost perpendicular face of the rock), and afterwards descending by steep zigzags to

Arrens. By this new road carriages can be taken, but much of the view is lost and the distance is greatly increased.

The view from the Col de Torte is worth the climb, and Arrens may be reached from Eaux Bonnes by a good walker in from five to six hours. This path is altogether to be recommended in fine weather, but, yielding to the exigencies of having to take the most popular routes, we must now go round by the old road.

Soon after seven o'clock, on one of the most lovely mornings in August, we find ourselves rolling swiftly along on a smooth high road, behind four galloping horses, the sweet morning air blowing freshly in our faces, and light fleecy clouds veiling us from the sun's rays; our position approaching much nearer to the realisation of Dr. Johnson's idea of Elysium, than that of a member of the Alpine Club.

And thus we shall find it, all through the Pyrenees, and thus must picture it, to be faithful chroniclers; our ordinary mode of travelling is in two extremes, we either outrage society by shouldering a knapsack and walking off like an Arab; or glide easily through the valleys in comfortable, but rather expensive carriages.

Passing again through Laruns and Louvie Juzon, we take an easterly direction, by the picturesque little town of Lestelle, to Lourdes. The latter part of

the route has been through a narrow gorge, which opens before we reach Lourdes, into the valley of Lavedan; and the river that we now see, and shall follow for many miles is the Gave de Pau. We have left the Béarnais district, and are in the department of Bigorre.

The old historic town of Lourdes, with its gloomy castle on the heights, its old gables and time-worn buildings, recalls many an episode of French history,

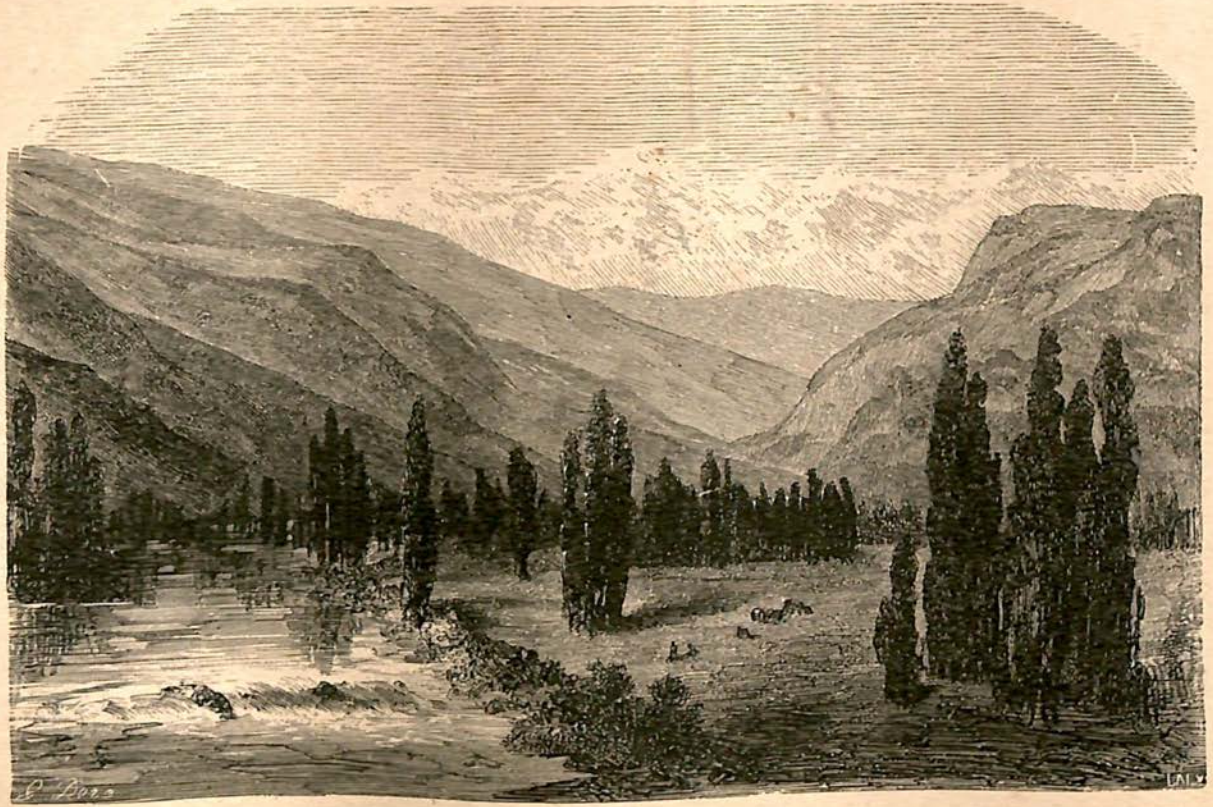
and (independently of associations) is a most suggestive subject for an artist's pencil. It is situated on the high road between Pau and Cauterets, and Bigorre and Gavarnie; several roads meet here, and overladen diligences rumble through the narrow streets all day, during the summer season.

There is a somewhat dreary appearance about this

part of our route—and the barren mountains with their ruins of forts—which is again agreeably varied on approaching Argelez, where we enter a scene of pastoral beauty and fertility, far exceeding that of the Val d'Ossau, reminding us, in its cornfields, orchards, and woods, of an English landscape. The valley broad and well-cultivated, the Gave wide and smooth

like a lake, the trees growing luxuriantly, the wild-flowers on banks of soft turf, the waving Indian corn, and the fresh green of the meadows—make it a charming picture, when seen on a lovely summer's day.

Argelez, a little village where travellers used to



PART OF THE VAL DE LUZ.

stay but a few hours, has already become renowned for the beauty of its site, and for the comfort of the little Hôtel de France. We have heard of people who have alighted here, intending to stay half-an-hour, sending for their luggage and remaining for the summer! There is so much to see in the neighbourhood of Argelez that we cannot wonder at the choice; it is one of the pleasantest spots in the Pyrenees, and in old times used to be cheap, but we fear that it is getting popular. The inhabitants of this part of the valley are comparatively simple and industrious, and it is not until we get beyond Pierrefitte that the system of begging troubles us much.

At Pierrefitte we join our companions, who have come over by the mountain route; and, taking fresh horses, continue our journey to Cauterets, leaving the route to Luz and Gavarnie, and turning up a zigzag road to the right hand. It is very steep for the first hour, and at several points of the road we obtain magnificent views of the valley through which we have just passed. As we walk slowly up this ascent, we overtake a man walking by himself, who, until we come up to him, seems unaware of our approach. He is a goodlooking fellow, dressed in Spanish costume, with knee breeches, a bright red sash, a jacket with silver buttons, and a long whip twisted and tied round his waist. We soon learn that he has taken the trouble to come all the way from Cauterets to inform

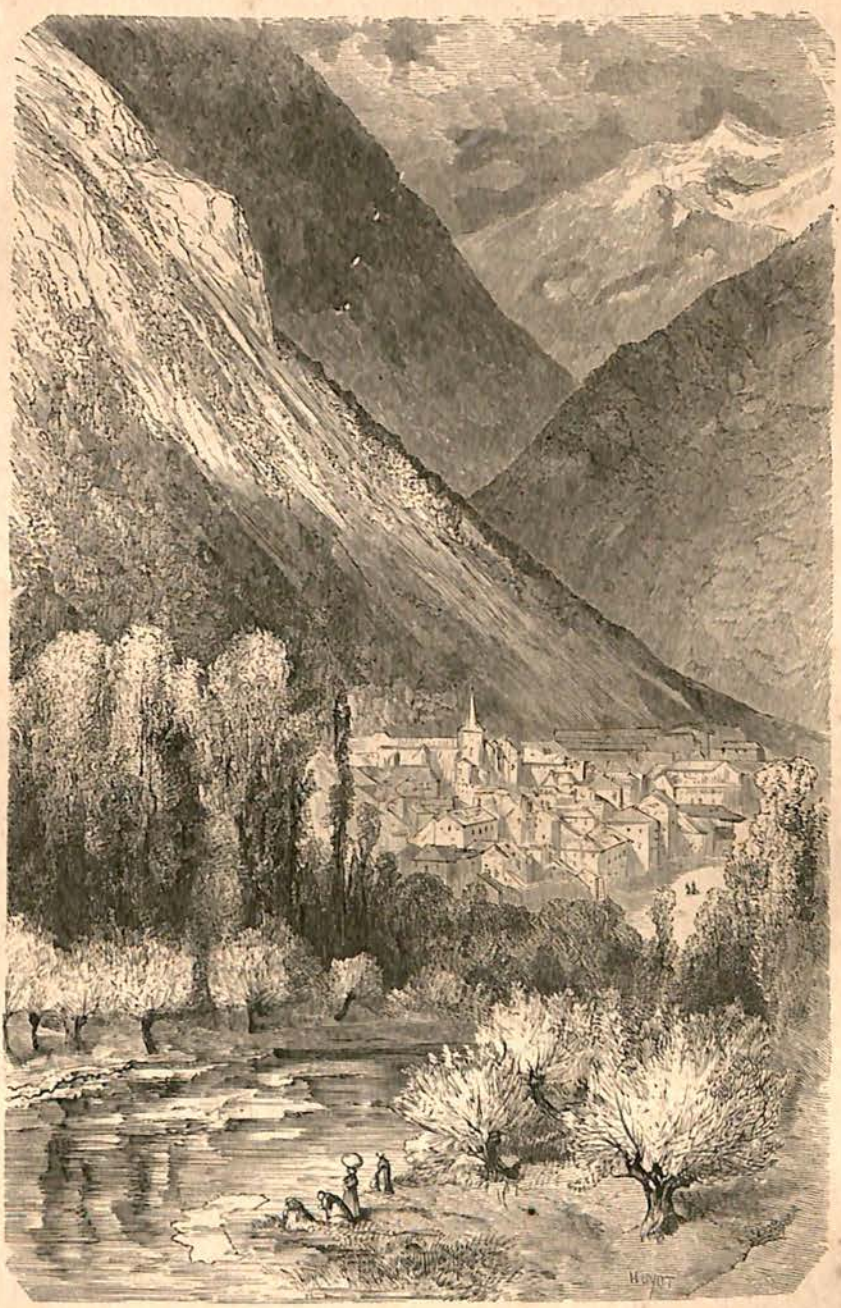
us which is the best inn, where are the best horses to ride to the Lac de Gaube, when we may take the baths, &c., and, above all, *who* is the very best guide in Cauterets. He is amusing, affable, and not to be shaken off until we get into a trot again; it is useless to tell him that we have engaged our rooms, that we intend to walk to the Lac de Gaube, and to dispense with guides.

"Ces Anglais will ruin the Pyrenees!" he mutters to himself. Yes—we have added another stone to the mound of our unpopularity, by persisting, when we are on the mountains, in using our legs for walking, and our wits for finding the way.

It is nearly dusk for the rest of the journey, but we soon discern in the distance some welcome lights, and in about twelve hours after leaving Eaux Bonnes drive into the garden in front of the Hôtel de France. The rooms are brilliantly lighted up, and in the salon we see people dancing; in the gardens and under the trees we hear laughter and the voices of women, and, here and there, little glow-worm lights betray the presence of the smoking sex.[1]

Our friend the guide, who has been riding behind, unperceived, upon our portmanteaus, now makes his appearance, and is the first to help us to alight and to show us our apartments.

[1] This by courtesy and in ignorance of facts; for we afterwards found that cigarettes were in great request, both with Spanish and French ladies.



CAUTERETS.

M. Taine speaks thus of his reception and first impression of Cauterets:—

'Cauterets est un bourg au fond d'une vallée, assez triste, pavé, muni d'un octroi. Hôteliers, guides, tout un peuple affamé nous investit; nous sommes raccrochés par des servantes, des enfants, des loueurs d'ânes, des garçons qui par hasard viennent se promener autour de nous. On nous offre des cartes, on nous vante l'emplacement, la cuisine; on nous accompagne, casquette en main, jusqu'au bout du village; en même temps on écarte à coups de coude des compétiteurs. "C'est mon voyageur, je te rosse si tu approches." Chaque hôtel a ses recruteurs à l'affût. Ils chassent—l'hiver à l'izzard, l'été au voyageur!'

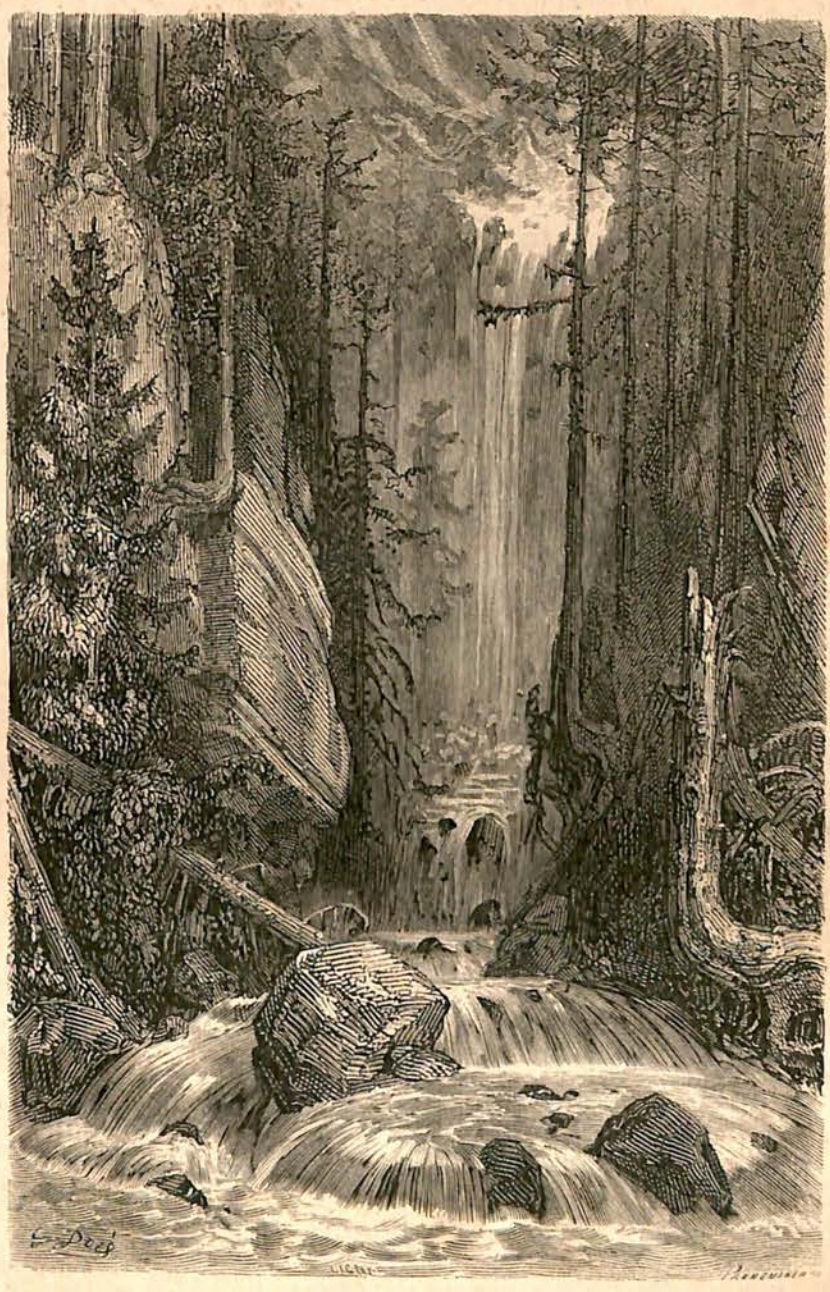
It is well to have a Frenchman's experience of Cauterets in the season; for if we were to recount our reception the next day (which was precisely similar), when we went out into the town, it might sound like exaggeration.

Cauterets has been considerably enlarged and improved, since the above was written, but the manners and customs remain. There are between two and three hundred houses, accommodating a population in the season of at least two thousand persons. The streets are crowded with people going to and from the baths; the market is gay with the stalls of bright wools for sale, and with groups of people in Spanish

costume; and there are any number of muleteers, guides, hucksters, and idlers, lolling about or sitting in the sun. Saddle horses and carriages for hire stand about in abundance, and there is generally a crowd round a party of Frenchmen who are preparing to start on some expedition. These starts are arranged in the middle of the high road, and sometimes take half an hour.

Nothing can be more charming than the rides in the neighbourhood. The air is fresh, and feels bracing; there is almost always a breeze coming down the valley, and you may ride under the shade of trees and through woods for hours.

No wonder that our ancestors, who came here for the healing waters, speak in such praise of Cauterets; if we only could divest ourselves of the sense of the presence of so many hundred sick people brought together, and attain a little more quiet and repose in the town, we could almost wish to stay for the summer. As it is, however, the perpetual jingle and noise like a fair, that continues without cessation from morning to night, sends us away to the mountains soon after it is light to return again at sundown.



CASCADE NEAR THE PONT D'ESPAGNE.

With the bathing, we who come to see the country have really little to do, and in spite of the celebrity of the springs of Cauterets, must give them only a passing allusion.

There are several sources of the waters, varying in temperature and slightly in composition. The Etablissement called *La Raillère*, which is considered one of the most efficacious in pulmonary complaints,[1] is built upon a raised terrace about a mile from the town, at the foot of Mont Regnère, on the road to the Lac de Gaube, to and from which, omnibuses are passing with patients all day. The thermal building comprises, according to Dr. Taylor, 'twenty-three cabinets de bain, a fountain for the water-drinkers, an ascending and descending douche, a large peristyle in marble arches, and an extensive terrace in front to take exercise in dry or wet weather.'

The extraordinary cures effected by these waters are the constant theme of conversation in the Pyrenees, and they are particularly esteemed by Spaniards, who come here in such numbers as to give Cauterets quite the appearance of a town on the other side of the frontier.

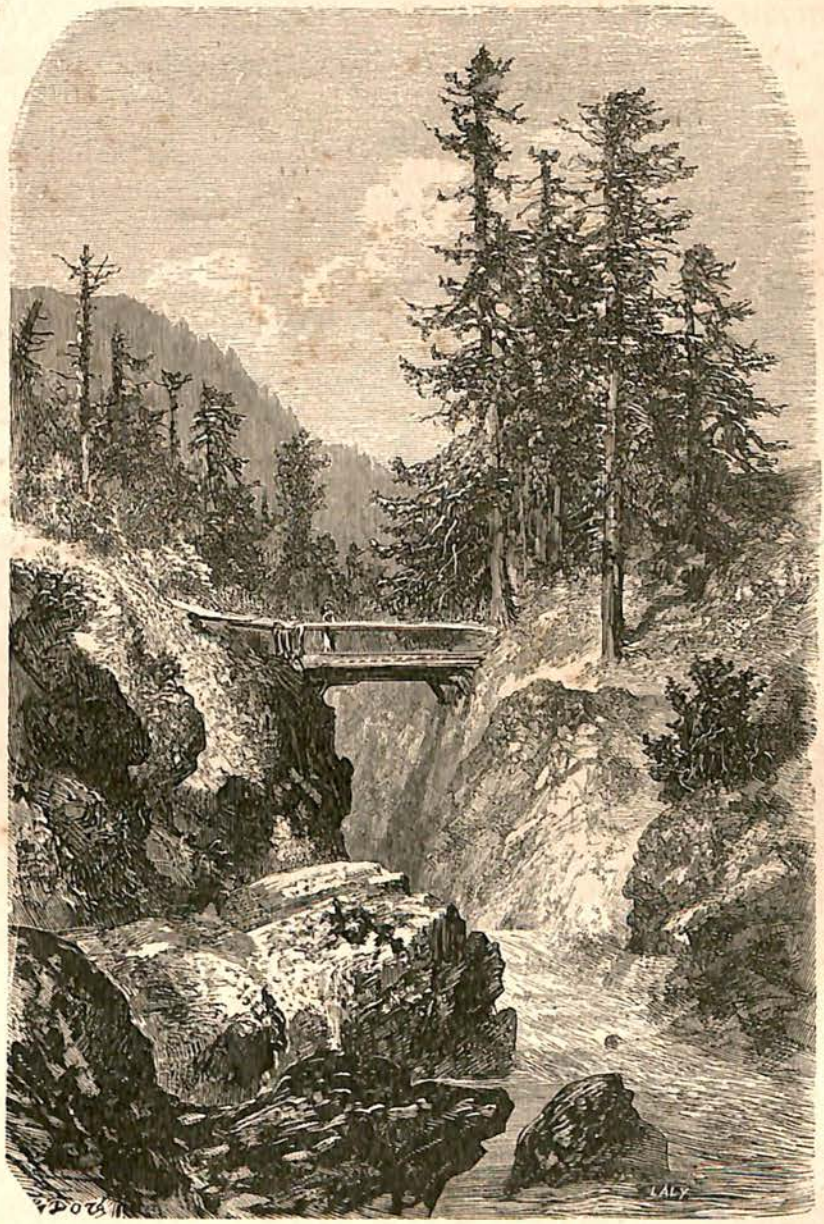
The best excursion in the neighbourhood—the one, in fact, which has brought us to Cauterets—is

[1] In Dr. Taylor's 'Climate of Pau, &c.,' will be found PATISSIER'S analysis of the water from this source.

to see one of the few lakes of which the Pyrenees can boast, the Lac de Gaube (5866 feet above the sea), for there is nothing we miss so much, in the scenery of the Pyrenees, as the lakes reflecting the blue sky. Even the waterfalls, numerous and picturesque as they are, appear somewhat insignificant compared with those of Switzerland, although there is a softness and luxuriant beauty in their 'surroundings' that compensates in great measure for any lack of grandeur.

It takes about two hours and a half to reach the Lac de Gaube, the path is easily found, and is well trodden during the season. Leaving the valley of Latour (in which Cauterets is situated) on our left hand, the road, passing La Raillère in about a quarter of an hour, ascends, first gradually through a wood and by several cascades, then through pine forests by a steep path for about six miles, when we reach the Pont d'Espagne. Here we make a halt before crossing into Spain, and wander about amongst the moss-grown rocks and débris through which the Gave rushes down, casting up a shower of spray which keeps the trees and shrubs in perpetual freshness.

From the Pont d'Espagne to the Lac de Gaube, is about two miles,—first by a steep ascent leading through a pine wood, thence over a path strewn with rocks and loose stones,—in a little less than an hour we reach the lonely mountain lake, so solitary, so still,



THE PONT D'ESPAGNE.

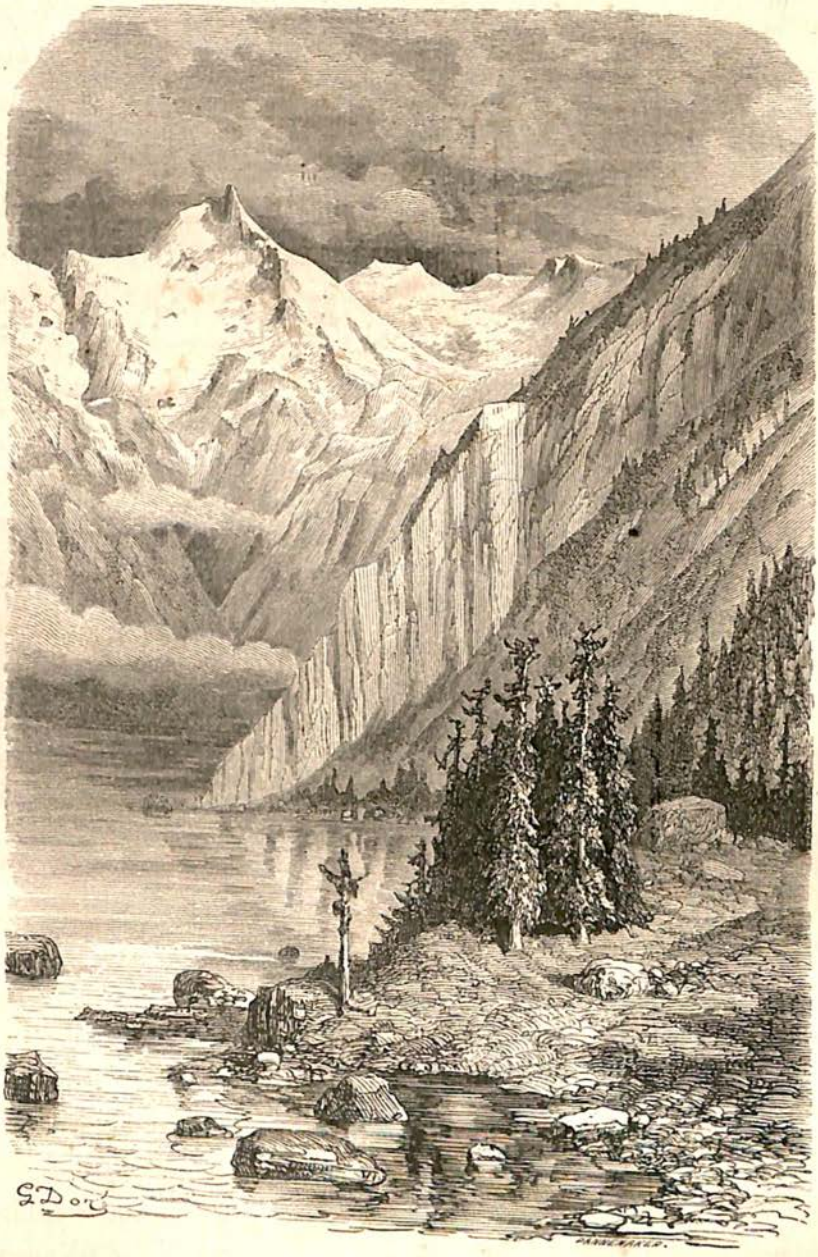
and so different from all we have passed on our way, as to take us quite by surprise.

It is about two miles and a half in circumference, and is said to be the largest lake in the Pyrenees. At one end is a little cabin, and hard by, on a rock, a white marble monument to the memory of an Englishman and his wife who were drowned here when on their wedding tour. The guides and the people who live in the little cabin tell the story, and, almost in the same breath, ask if we will not take a row across the lake.

On our way hither we have passed several parties on foot and on horseback, but now that we have arrived at the lake we see no one; they have all retired to the hut to breakfast on the lake trout, and leave us to the quiet enjoyment of the place.

The Lac de Gaube is a perfect mountain-basin, the water being prevented from escaping into the valley by a natural granite wall, which forms a sort of embankment at the northern end. From this point we obtain a grand view of the snow-covered Vignemale, reflected in the still water. The sides of the lake are steep and rugged, with black masses of fir trees reaching almost to the water's-edge, making a dark sombre foreground.

At the upper end of the lake, we can just trace the waterfall which winds down from its glacier source; and if we were to sleep in the little cabin, and row



THE LAC DE GAUBE.

recollect one party, during fourteen years, who had proceeded to the upper lake. However, being determined to make the attempt, we induced one of the goatherds to guide us, and commenced the ascent of one of the most uninviting mountains in creation (a near neighbour of the Vignemale, and little inferior in height), where our first essay at ascending was over a bridge of snow, with a torrent running beneath.

'After two or three hours of toilsome labour, we gained one of the crests of the mountains, and had the satisfaction to see on the other side, many hundred feet beneath us, the Lac d'Estom, Soubiran, completely frozen over, and this in the south of France, a few miles from Spain, and on the 6th of July!'

We quote the above as a suggestion to others staying at Cauterets for any length of time, because those who have made the ascent long after Dr. Taylor, all concur in the extraordinary interest attaching to this excursion, for which the short allusion in the guide-books hardly prepares us. It is well to add, that it is positively dangerous in bad or uncertain weather.

Every day during our stay is occupied in some picturesque excursion in the environs, which we never seem to have exhausted, and every evening we are launched on a sea of small dissipations, the like of which we could never have imagined possible on the steep side of a mountain 3000 feet above the level of

the sea. It is one continual round of dancing, singing, promenading (and, we may add, flirting), everything to make us forget the mountains, and much to remind us of the *Jardin des Fleurs*.

Only one evening differed from the rest, which we will describe as we put it down at the time.

Just a little weary of 'life' at Cauterets—life as represented by the interminable bathing and promenading, and by the little songs and dances of which our evenings are made up—we venture into the 'salon de lecture,' to see what is there provided for our amusement or instruction.

In most of the principal hotels in the Pyrenees there is a large apartment, sometimes forty or fifty feet long, handsomely furnished with clocks and moderator lamps, with rich hangings to the windows, and a profusion of uncomfortable chairs. The floor is waxed and slippery; in the centre there is a little table, like an island, with the papers of the day upon it, and in one corner, some book-shelves containing the 'library'—everything provided sumptuously for the guests that never come. There is solitude in this room any evening in the height of the season; through the open windows we hear, indeed, the distant whistles and drums of civilisation, but we share the vast salon with a bat.

The pile of newspapers consists almost entirely of literature intended for visitors to 'Les Eaux,' and is earnestly devoted to advertising the various watering-

places of France. Their titles are suggestive enough, viz. :—

'GAZETTE DES EAUX.'	'ECHOS DE L'ADOUR.'
'NYMPHE DES EAUX.'	'REVUE DE LUCHON.'
'MONITEUR DES EAUX."	'INDICATEUR DE PAU.'
'LE MONDE THERMAL.'	'NOUVELLES DE CAUTERETS.'
'MÉMORIAL DES PYRÉNÉES.'	'LE MONDE ILLUSTRÉ,' &c.

nearly all belonging to the butterfly order, having a short life and a merry one—spreading their wings in summer time and then disappearing altogether.

Illustrations, and caricatures by Cham, are great features, and the headings to the papers themselves are curiosities—one having a picture of the rising sun upon it, and the motto '*Il parait tous les jours!*' The 'feuilletons' are rich in literary treasures of the sensational description. The readers of one journal are promised that the exciting tale of 'Le Vagabond,' is to be followed by another entitled, 'Crime et Châtiment—a tale of horror,' &c. There are scraps of politics, not very new, nor always very intelligible. Thus, under the heading of 'Chronique,' we read that 'Europe is agitated and trembles; there is a vague feeling that great events "se preparent"! &c. Under the heading of 'Etranger,' we have the following news from Chili:—

'Les R. R. P. P. Jésuites, having persuaded the young women of Santiago to place themselves in regular epistolary correspondence with the Virgin, a special box has been attached to the doors of the churches for the reception of letters.'

There are two illustrations to this last piece of intelligence, one representing a lady hesitatingly consigning a letter to the 'Buzon de la Virgen,' a box decorated with lace and flowers; another, called 'Departure of letters for the Holy Virgin,' where two priests are seen burning letters on a salver held high in the air!

Besides the 'news,' there are selections of original poetry, conundrums, and puffs of tradesmen in abundance, but the most interesting piece of intelligence is to be found under the heading of '*Nouvelles de Cauterets*,' being an account of a young lady of 'high position and princely liberality,' who—imitating the good old days of the Trianon, when Marie Antoinette and the ladies of her court went about disguised as milkmaids—attended the fêtes here in the dress of a peasant girl, but who, truth to tell, had so many admirers in her 'simple but piquante' attire, that she was forced to beat a rapid retreat.

This was the great event of the season—a topic that supplied us with conversation every evening during our stay. A column and a half of the '*Journal de Cauterets*' was devoted to a description of this young and beautiful Hungarian countess, who, in her simple peasant's dress, and handkerchief tied coquettishly round her head, (armed with the patois for *No* 'to keep off the shepherds!') joined the fête champêtre, and acted her character with 'the most perfect simplicity!'

'What is the use of being young, charming, rich, and titled if one may not have a few caprices?' asks the journalist, with delightful naïveté; ending his praises by holding up the young lady as a pattern to all 'baigneuses' present, and to come, on account of her generosity. Perhaps it is cynical to suggest it, but the whole reads very like a puff, when it concludes with a list of her good deeds; how she gave 100 francs to the church, 50 francs to the fête, &c., and how, on the day of her departure, she left a handsome sum for the benefit of the poor of Cauterets.

The library in the salon contained a few old books of reference, but the bulk of the mental pabulum was made up as follows, reading hastily through the titles:—

'UN CHEVALIER D'AMOUR.'
'LES FEMMES D'AUJOURD'HUI.'
'LES GANDINS (MYSTÈRE DU DEMI-MONDE).'
'LA VOLEUSE D'AMOUR.'
'LE DERNIER AMOUR.'
'UNE PARVENUE.'
'LES AMOURS DU VERT-GALANT.'
'LES BELLES PÊCHERESSES.'
'LES COURS GALANTES.'
'ENTRE DEUX FEMMES.'
'LES ERRANTS DE NUIT.'

All through the week—every evening during our stay at Cauterets—a sort of fair was kept up; and we could not have believed, if we had not seen it for ourselves, that such a collection of trinkets, toys, and trumpery from the Palais Royal, could have been here brought together.

We had donkey races, running in sacks, and climbing poles; in fact, it was more like a village merry-making in England than anything else we can compare it to. There were 'courses de cruches,' races with vessels full of water carried on the heads of young girls, most of whom were drenched in a most pitiless manner; whilst one, 'Mademoiselle Sophie,' the most active and spirited of the party, carried off a prize of 10 francs for having maintained the 'cruche en équilibre.'

Our remembrances of Cauterets are (independently of the fair) of an expensive residence, of a most fashionable promenade, of the noises of whips cracking, pianos jingling, of singing, of smoking ad libitum; of tall men riding diminutive ponies, and "les grandes dames,' gaily caparisoned mules; of the town looking as if it was perpetually going out to dinner in sedan-chairs, of salons, of 'journals pour rire et pour instruire,' with articles diluted to holiday calibre, of cascades and springs, of water—water, everywhere; of English scrambling up the rocks, of Frenchmen 'en promenade,' and of Spaniards sitting under the trees.

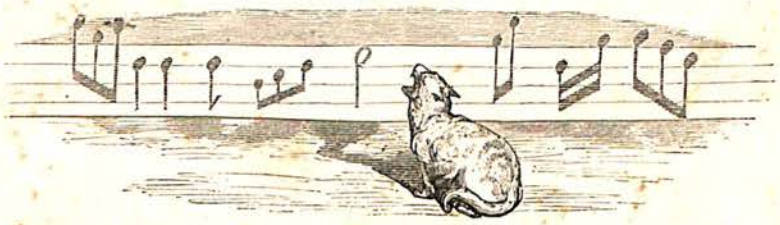
Our thoughts, if we analyse them, are not so much of the mountains and of the pine-forests that overhang its streets, as of smooth lawns and parterres; not of torrents, but of the prettiest artificial cascades; not of rocks in their natural beauty, but of granite, smoothed and 'faced,' and turned into dwellings for

the lords of the creation; of waters bottled off and stamped with the seal of the empire; and of the very stones at the road-side, numbered and registered like citizens of France.

In short, everything was civilised at Cauterets, they had civilised a bear; and nothing will leave a more

mournful memory, not even the tragedy at the Lac de Gaube, than the picture of this dancing bear (performing almost in sight of his comrades looming down from the mountains), and of his fellow in misfortune, the monkey that took the money.

A satire upon society—a thing to be remembered, was the appearance of this last little figure, a type of the artificial atmosphere of the place—the 'fun of the fair' for one sou; a strange, sad-looking being (wearing a red 'berret' on his head and a bright embroidered sash), with very little of the animal about him—altogether a forlorn and most dissipated-looking little monkey, thus over-dressed and out of his element—the image, in little, of many who crowd round him, the perfect type of 'la vie"



CHAPTER VI.

STORM.

'La gorge était illuminée dans ses profondeurs; ses blocs entassés, ses arbres accrochés aux roches, ses ravines déchirées, son Gave écumant, apparaissaient dans une blancheur livide, et s'évanouissaient comme les visions fugitives d'un monde tourmenté et inconnu.

'Bientôt la grande voix du tonnerre roula dans les gorges; les nuages qui le portaient rampaient à mi-côté et venaient se choquer entre les roches; la foudre éclatait comme une décharge d'artillerie; le vent se leva et la pluie vint.'—*Taine.*

IT is not uncommon for travellers who have come to the mountains in summer time for health and recreation, and whose only chance of enjoyment is the continuance of fine weather, to regard with something of anxiety the slightest sign of clouds gathering round the distant peaks; and it is also not uncommon for them to see, at the same time, a long procession headed by a priest, winding slowly up the valley.

The country, green and bright as it looks, is really

suffering from drought, and, as a last resource, the curé, or priest, has been appealed to. A mass is celebrated, the hat is handed round, money is subscribed liberally, and—in due time, the rain comes.

In our wanderings in the Val d'Ossau and the Val de Luz, we had frequently noticed traces of the ravages of storms, and in the windings of the Gave, the marks where in many places it had overflowed its banks; but the beauty of the weather, which continued day by day with almost a monotony of sunshine and blue sky, and the calm and peaceful aspect of security with which the inhabitants seemed to be gathering their harvest and tending their flocks, left us quite unprepared for the startling change that a few hours brought about.

The following, from our note book, may give a more vivid impression of the scene than anything we could re-write.

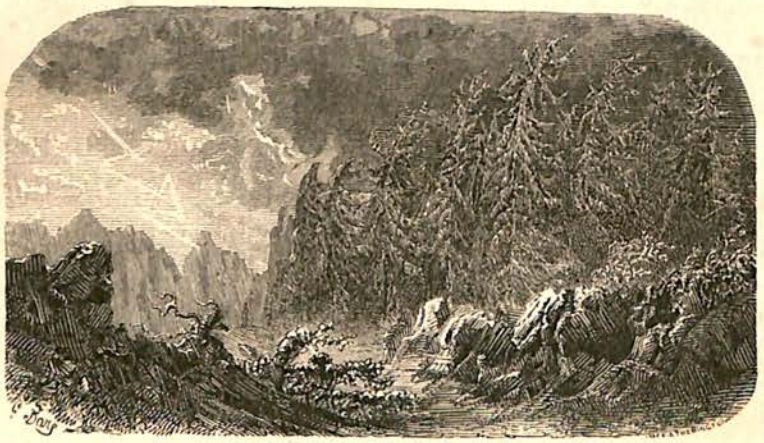
The morning had been fine and cloudless, as usual, with a sun almost as powerful as in the tropics; it was too hot to do anything apparently, but work in the fields, as the women and young girls were doing, some bareheaded and barefooted, binding the sheaves of Indian corn, and struggling under loads of hay, that an English labourer would hesitate to carry.

There was little to indicate a coming storm within half an hour of its breaking, but then the signs were unmistakeable and not to be disregarded.

First of all, a few little clouds were seen to gather at the head of the valley in a wild uncertain manner, and every now and then, we heard trees rustling in the wind higher up the mountains, although not a leaf stirred near us; presently we seemed encompassed by four winds at once, and the dust and leaves, and sheaves of corn, were whirled up in the air with the suddenness of an explosion. The sun was still shining brightly, and there were few clouds overhead, but, as if with a sudden instinct of self-preservation, every living thing in the valley and on the mountains hurried home. The women left the fields, the men their work in the forests, the birds were silent, the dogs disappeared, the cattle of their own accord drew away to shelter, higher up the valley, and even the pigs (who sleep in companies by the roadside) roused themselves for once and shuffled home.

Down the narrow street of the little village, a herd of goats are hustling and struggling, under the heels of a sullen grey pony, who, with his forefeet planted firmly in the ground, and his mane and tail spread out by the wind, stands immoveable, without a purpose apparently but obstruction. A few of the most active of the inhabitants are tying their carts and implements to the trunks of trees, and stowing away loose timber, but the majority are engaged in barring their doors, or peering furtively from dark windows and apertures, in a manner that suggests a Poussin or a Teniers.

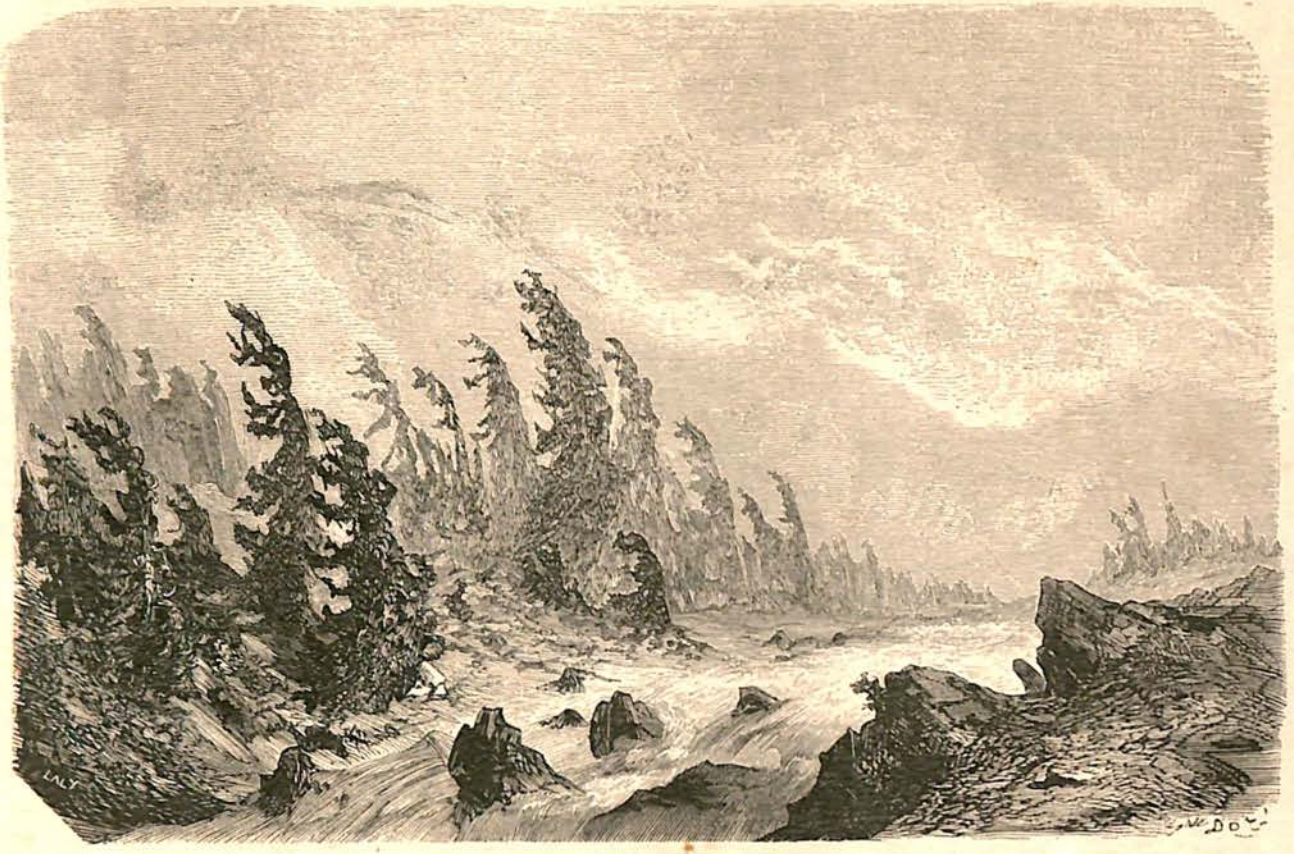
But now all interest is centred in the approaching storm, and it is a difficult task to describe the change, the almost dramatic suddenness, with which a sunny smiling valley is turned into a howling wilderness. A shadow should be cast over these pages, something more expressive than words, more powerful even than Doré's pencil, should be enlisted in the



service, and something should be done, were it possible, to give the moaning of the wind. The sound is piteous, and now almost constant, interrupted only by the thunder, and the distant roar of waterfalls.

The sun has not quite left the lower part of the valley, but the mountain-tops are in darkness, excepting when a sudden lightning flash reveals their outlines for a moment.

Another ten minutes and the clouds come down,



THE BATTLE OF THE TREES.

closing over us, like a dark veil stretched completely across the valley. The wind that fanned us so gently but an hour since, sweeps past with the noise and fury of battle, bending the tall pine trees as it passes over them, dashing the waterfalls into spray, and scattering far and wide the sheaves of corn. Suddenly another element is added—a downpour as of a cataract, swelling the Gave to a roaring torrent, which now joins in the tumult.

Let us see what havoc is being made on its banks. Following its windings as far as we can discern through the clouds and rain, there are several companies of weather-beaten pines, against which the storm is raging in all its fury. As the clouds pass over they are continually concealed from view, as if in the smoke of battle, every here and there their ranks appearing—now resisting, now falling, bending, or snapping before the blast, but generally reappearing with a persistence that suggests to the spectator something human and heroic in the fight.

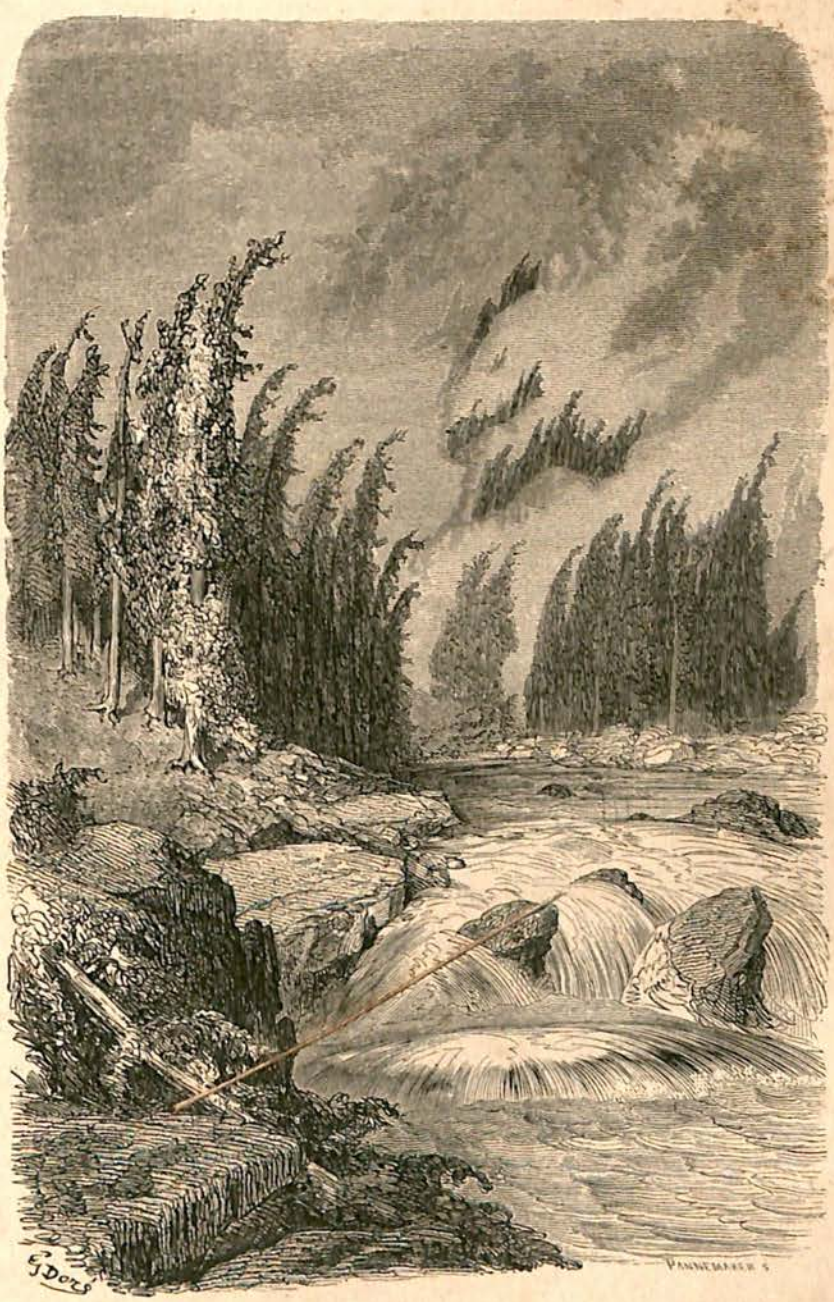
Nothing, however, that we have yet seen—not the grandeur of the storm, its suddenness, or its power of destruction—is so extraordinary as the mass of water which has risen on every side. The lower parts of the valley have become one vast lake, dotted with island tree-tops, haystacks, timber, and wrecks of all kinds, carried down by the flood. The villages built on rising ground (with foreknowledge of these disas-

ters), escape the deluge, but many outlying buildings and parts of the road have altogether disappeared. In scarcely less time than it takes to write it, we see acres of water where there were cultivated fields, and the rain that came with the thunder and the wind, now falls steadily and straight like a waterspout.

In half an hour all is again changed, the rain ceases as suddenly as it came, the mist clears, and the clouds drift away through the trees. The sides of the valley are streaked with torrents looking like veins of silver, every little cascade has become for the time a torrent, and the Gave, now dark, muddy, and turbulent, burdened with floating timber and débris of all kinds, has scarcely any limit, for there is water everywhere.

When the storm had ceased, the water seemed to subside in the upper part of the valley almost as rapidly as it had risen, but the scene here was, if possible, more desolate, from the havoc that had been made amongst the trees in exposed situations.

One point was very striking, where we came to a piece of pasture-land separated on either side by a narrow gorge. This promontory was a complete mountain-wreck; it had been exposed to the full fury of two winds meeting in their downward course, and everything had 'gone by the board'—trees were stripped of their branches, torn down, snapped


G. Doré

and twisted into strange fantastic shapes, scarcely a whole stem out of a regiment of stately pines—

nothing but waifs and strays, like a harvest-field when given up to the gleaners.

Nothing was to be heard at this spot but the rushing of waters, no human being was in sight, no cattle had returned to pasture, nothing living apparently, save two young eagles that flew low in

the valley, and a solitary lizard (who had had much more water than was good for him) that came out of his hiding-place, and spread a spangled S upon the rock.

Then when the clouds had gathered up from the valley, there came a stream of light from the west, that, glancing from the rocks and torrents on either side, fell full upon this promontory, gilding the stems of the shattered pines, and marking in characters only too distinct the devastating work of storms.

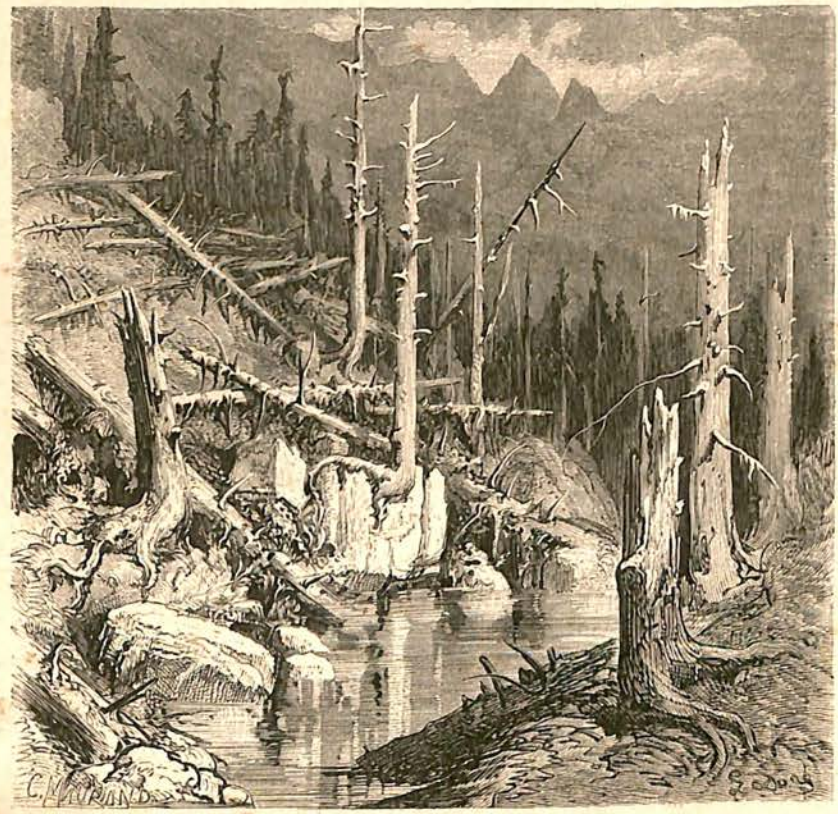
A few hours only and the waters will subside, and it will again be 'summer in the Pyrenees.'

A word about Doré's illustrations of these storms, which seem to us, some of the finest works he has ever achieved. As we stood in our secure shelter, watching, what it did not require much stretch of the imagination to picture as a battle, we confess to have been completely carried away by the human aspect of the fight, long before we had seen the drawings, and can hardly agree with those who think that in depicting such subjects, M. Doré has given too much scope to his fancy.

There is a parallel to it, which we must be pardoned for alluding to in passing, a scene of even greater interest, which is enacting any stormy autumn day, not so very far from us, here, on the North African shore, where a group of palm-trees have stood guard for more than a hundred years over Mahommedan tombs. To see these giants battling with the storm, crashing against each other, swaying and moaning in the wind, with their plumed heads bowed and dishevelled, their dead comrades lying at their feet, is something more fearful than the battle of the pines, but of precisely the same human and dramatic character.

And the sunset after the storm, which is one of the grandest sights in the Pyrenees, calls to mind even more vividly the same group of palm-trees, not

in war, but in peace—when their dark funereal plumes (tattered and weather-stained, like the colours and



trophies of war) are tinged with a deep orange hue, and we see

> 'The grace and glory of their feathery branches
> Spread like wings that love the light,'

and wish that any words of ours could induce our

great English landscape painters[1] to depict these scenes—scenes worthy of the full expression of a poet's heart, either by his pencil or his pen.

[1] Since writing the above we have seen one great modern painting of a storm in the Pyrenees, and English artists have sketched the 'Bouzareah,' near Algiers, both in storm and sunshine; but we believe we may say with truth, that these subjects have never yet been adequately painted.

CHAPTER VII.

VAL DE LUZ—GAVARNIE—BRÈCHE DE ROLAND.

THE approach to Luz and St. Sauveur by the Gorge de Pierrefitte is of a wild and desolate character, which the ruins of castles on the heights seem rather to increase, giving it altogether a different aspect to the valley near Argelez.

In order to reach St. Sauveur from Cauterets, we have had, as usual, to retrace our steps, this time only a distance of about eight miles, as far as Pierrefitte, where we turn southwards again, entering the gorge, of which the next illustration will convey some idea to the reader.

At one point the road is carried along a ledge of rock which overhangs the Gave, and for some distance

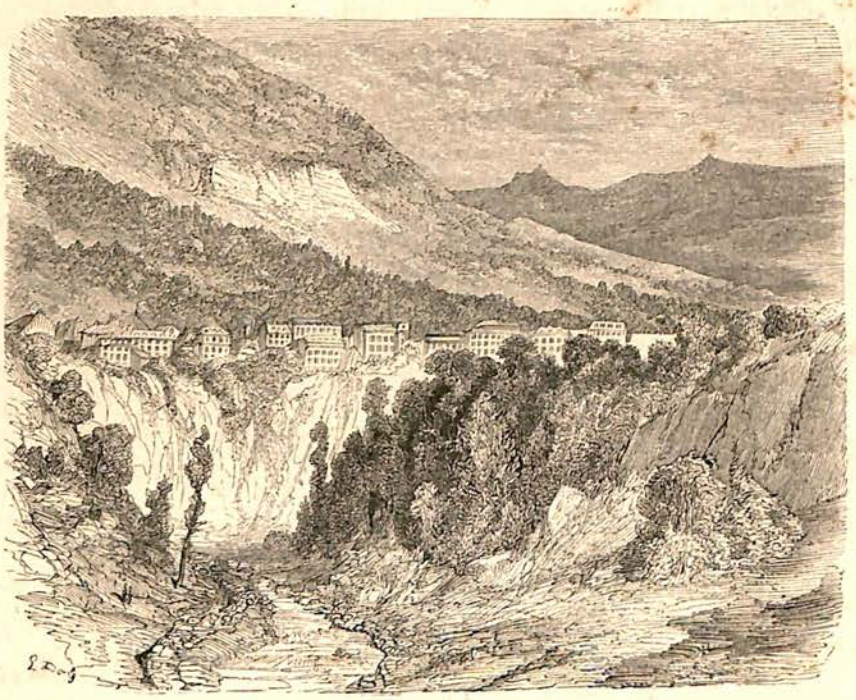
THE GORGE DE PIERREFITTE.

we pass between two walls of rock, which resemble the Via Mala on the passage of the Splugen, only that within a few yards of this stern region, the sides of the mountains are covered with foliage, with heath, ferns, ivy, and multitudes of small creeping plants, and that (unlike Switzerland) in a few hours we shall arrive, not at a hospice where friendly monks come through the snow to receive us, but at the door of a 'grand hôtel,' where there is the best *dîner à la russe* to be had in the Pyrenees, and where the valley echoes to the serenades of the villagers to the Empress of the French, who is staying with her suite at St. Sauveur.

When the valley expands again, several miles from Pierrefitte, we see before us the old town of Luz, which we shall visit on our return to Gavarnie, and keeping to the right, or the western side of the valley, we arrive at the village of St. Sauveur, consisting of a long street of lodging-houses and hotels, built on a ledge of rock above the Gave, as we see in the next illustration.

Luz and St. Sauveur are within a mile of each other, the latter being at the foot of the beautiful valley leading to Gavarnie. St. Sauveur is a very popular watering-place, and has been crowded with fashionable visitors whenever we have seen it; but when the Empress chooses it for a summer residence, the noise and racket, and crowding in a small compass, are things to be avoided by all quietly-disposed people.

There is accommodation for upwards of three hundred persons, and the situation is charming, the



ST. SAUVEUR.

walks and rides in the neighbourhood surpassing, in variety and extent, those either of Cauterets or Eaux Bonnes.

We might have arrived here by a mountain path from Cauterets, but should then have missed the Gorge de Pierrefitte; it is a regular alpine scramble, taking longer than the carriage-road, and which Mr.

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW.

Paris calls 'a laborious journey of about five or six hours.' The following are his notes of the walk over.

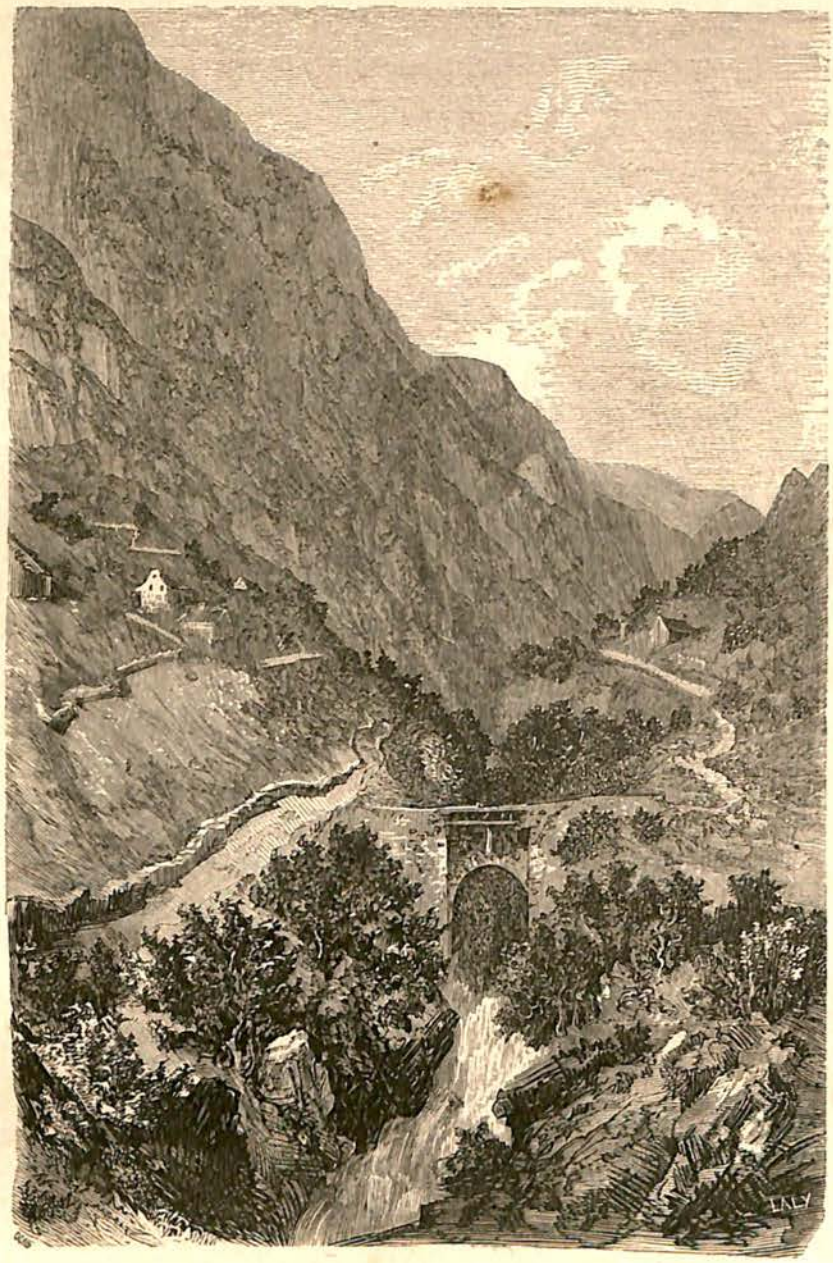
'I started at ten o'clock, intending to walk very leisurely and dedicate the day to the excursion. In the early part of the ascent the path led through sloping lawns, hanging woods, and cultivated meadows; châlets were perched here and there, and masses of rock lay among the flowers of this smiling Eden, reminding the traveller that there were sterner regions above. Delicious milk was to be obtained at the different cottages, and I found most of the highlanders busy in manufacturing butter for the neighbouring town of Cauterets.

'Having climbed the grassy pastures near the summit, I at length stood upon the crest of the ridge, whence I looked upon a mountain region of great extent. Of all these bird's-eye views over the High Pyrenees desolation is the prevailing characteristic; for although from many gorges and valleys the heights appear to be covered by luxuriant woods, it must be remembered that the slope of the mountain conceals its giant shoulders, as well as the greater part of its body, a fact which is immediately perceived upon ascending a neighbouring elevation, when the vast forests that seem to clothe it even to the very summit, may be seen to sink lower and lower, the higher we rise, and gradually to disappear in the deep gulfs that separate the ridges, whilst the upper zone

of pasture or naked rock becomes developed. Cone-shaped mountains, moreover, of which you may perhaps actually see the summits from the valley, have their upper regions so fore-shortened, that we are quite unable to judge of their magnitude or fertility until we view them from an opposite height. When perched upon these aërial summits, in the midst of the Hautes Pyrénées, we can see nothing around us but long desolate ridges, scored and broken by torrents; vegetation lies crouching in the hollows, and the bare bones of this wonderful earth meet the eye.

'The descent to Luz proved much longer than I had expected, but the views were grand, and the slopes not difficult, and covered with wild flowers.'

From the passage just quoted it will be seen that when we have spoken of the crests of the mountains in the Pyrenees being fringed with trees, we have alluded only to what meets the eye, ignoring the more distant summits, that those who keep to the valleys scarcely ever see. If we had not done this we should have failed in giving a true idea of the most charming characteristic of these mountains, or a faithful picture of them as ordinarily seen. Perhaps we have altogether spent more time on the high passes than in the valleys, but every year we become more impressed with the conviction that a mountain, like a monument, was intended to be seen



BRIDGE AT SCIA.

from below, and that views from great heights and from mountain-tops are generally failures, when objects lose their beauty of form, and there is little or nothing to guide the eye to any distinct distance or perspective.

We must now leave the neighbourhood of St. Sauveur, and passing over the new stone bridge which spans the Gave with one magnificent arch, walk up the valley by the right bank of the river towards Gavarnie.

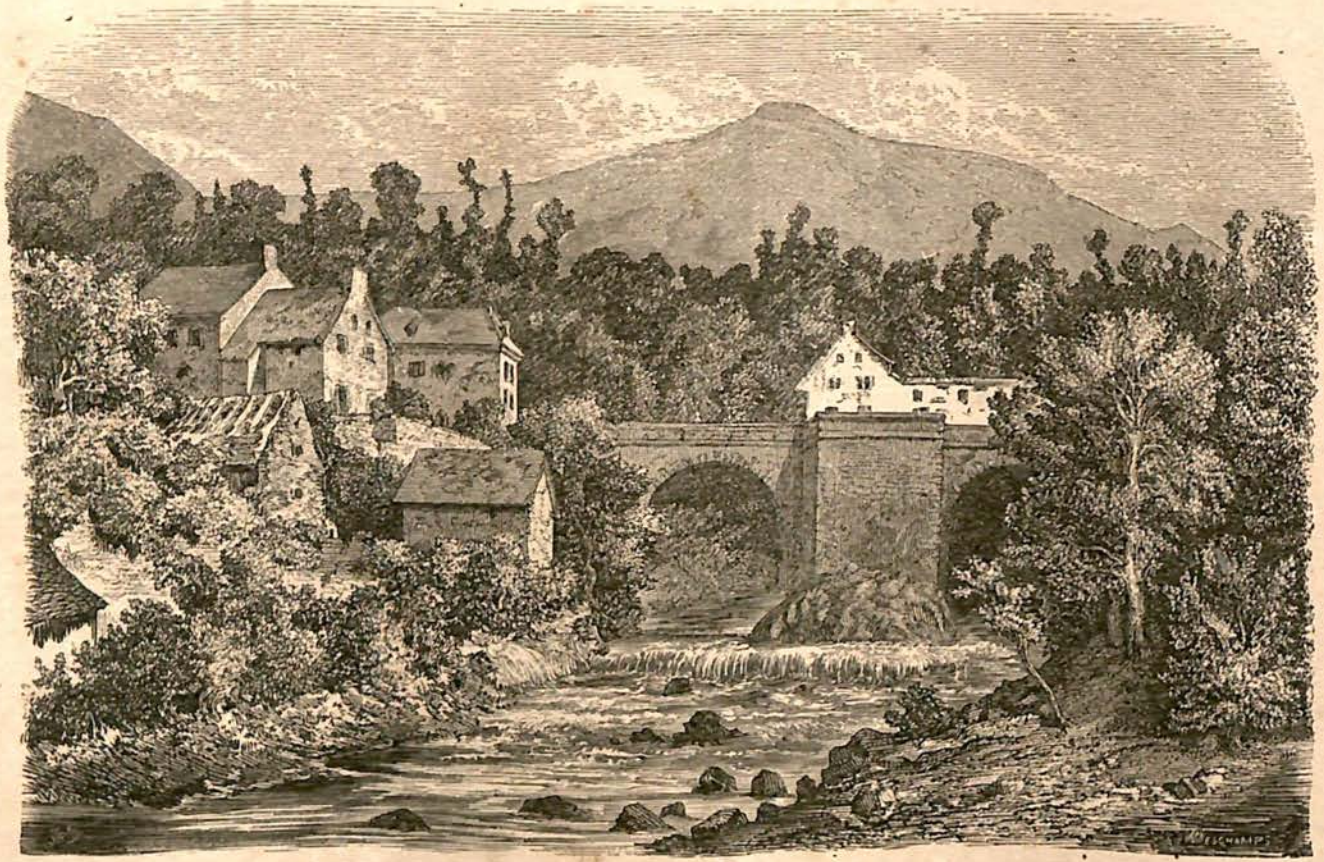
'Il est enjoint,' says Taine, 'à tout être vivant et pouvant monter un cheval, un mulet, un quadrupède quelconque, de visiter Gavarnie; à défaut d'autres bêtes, il devrait, tout haute cessant, enfourcher un âne;' but a good carriage-road has now been completed all the way to Gavarnie, and there are numerous conveyances passing up and down in the summer.

It is said—but the same thing has been said so often of different parts of the Pyrenees, that we almost weary of the repetition of the remark—that this valley is alone worth coming to see. Certainly at a point a few miles up, where Doré has made his sketch, at the bridge of Scia, we can imagine nothing more beautiful; or a more lovely, charming combination of woods, and rocks, and waterfalls, and mountain forms, than this view—one quite unattainable from the heights of which we have just been speaking.

Crossing over the bridge, and now keeping to the left bank of the stream, passing in our route the ruins of an old fort, and through a narrower and wilder part of the valley, we come to an open space, or basin, called Pragnères; then through the gorge of Trimbareille to the village of Gèdres at the entrance of another valley leading to Héas, a little mountain village, consisting of a church —one building that may be called a house, and two or three small hovels. It is, however, a most convenient spot from which to approach the great chain near the Pic des Aiguillons, affording, according to the best authority, homely refreshment, and two available beds.

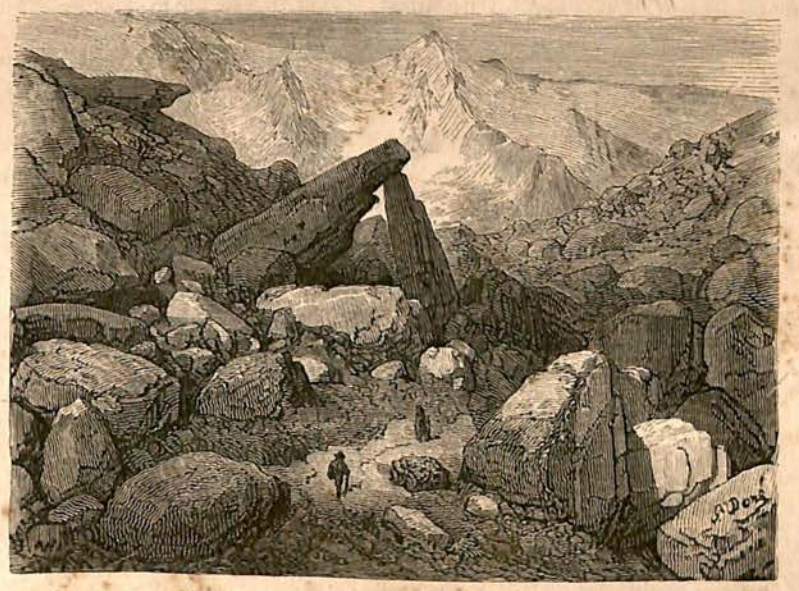
Leaving Gèdres, and continuing up the valley, passing on our right hand a beautiful cascade, we enter upon a scene which it is scarcely possible to describe adequately, so utterly different is its aspect from any ordinary phase of nature.

On the other side of the Pyrenees, on the high road to Madrid, the traveller passes over mountains covered with a wilderness of loose rocks and stones, lying scattered and heaped up pell-mell, without any apparent reason or design; but he is hurried through the dreary landscape by express train, glad to escape even the memory of this forsaken-looking land. Here, on the path to Gavarnie, the pedestrian comes, gradually, upon a scene of grandeur and wild



GÈDRES.

confusion, which is almost terrible to contemplate; the road, winding through a maze of giant boulders,



CHAOS.

which seem to have been cast about as if in some fearful explosion—we say explosion, because it is difficult, otherwise, to give any idea of the confused aspect of the rocks.[1] We see nothing like the traces of an ordinary upheaving of nature, or of the advance of glaciers; everything is as its name implies, *chaos*, a

[1] Some of these single boulders are the size of a large house; many of them are grass-grown, or covered with moss and lichen, and in cavities where there is a little soil, the box-tree grows out of their sides.

group of mountain fragments thrown down like hail, turning the bed of the valley into a ruin.

In about an hour and a half after leaving Gèdres we reach Gavarnie, a little mountain village, consisting of a few huts and one comfortable inn. It is 4380 feet above the sea, and is a most delightful place to stay at in summer, to explore the glaciers and neighbouring mountains. The air is fresh and invigorating, having that crisp, bracing, mountain-feeling, if we may use the expression, that is seldom experienced in the Pyrenees at the same altitude.

When we arrived, there were a few guides sitting about in the sun; and in the inn, one traveller, who soon made himself known to us as the author of the 'Guide to the Pyrenees,' a book which has perhaps done more than any other to popularise these mountains amongst Englishmen. During our stay he was the only other occupant of the inn, and it was a source of great regret that circumstances prevented our joining him in several expeditions, to the higher chain, which he was making alone. Mr. Packe said that he generally made Gavarnie his head-quarters in the summer; that he had been here several months, and was now leaving for a few weeks, to return again.

There is something about the life of this solitary Englishman amongst the mountains, that seems to us pathetically interesting, because, notwithstanding all

CHAOS.

he has done to lay down routes and lead the way through the Pyrenees, he has but few sympathisers and scarcely any followers, even amongst his *confrères*, the members of the Alpine Club. When we consider how he has devoted himself to this object, in the face of numerous obstacles, not the least of these being the ignorance of the peasantry, and the want of guides who know the mountains (or if knowing them who will not act as guides), it is disheartening to find so few men following his example.

And why do they not come? He puts the question—not crying out with the robust clamour of Mr. Sala, from Algeria, 'Why do not you come out here, oh ye great British public?'—but asking mildly, 'How it comes to pass that so many Englishmen and Englishwomen cross the Channel every summer, for the sake of a holiday tour of a month or six weeks among the Alps of Switzerland, while so very few in proportion think it worth while to pay a visit to the Pyrenees?'

Perhaps we may be permitted to attempt a solution of the problem. It is not the distance, nor the expense, nor the time occupied in getting here (now reduced by railway, to eighteen hours from Paris to Pau) that keeps our countrymen away, but a foreknowledge, however gained, that there is not the same enjoyment to be had in a tour of six weeks in the

Pyrenees. There is not the same fun, there is not the same atmosphere of exhilaration (we will not say exhilaration of atmosphere, because this is attained to some extent at all great elevations), or the same amount of 'go,' no other word will express it, that there is in Switzerland.

We, English people, have not yet taken to these mountains, or made them our playground. Until we do this, and encourage the race of guides, now fast springing up, and tempt speculators to build hotels on such spots as Gavarnie, or 'Super Bagnères' near Luchon; until we explode the guide-book prejudice that the Pyrenees are unhealthy, and 'come out here' every summer, with our knapsacks, to take quiet possession of 'les hautes Pyrénées'—not intruding our tweeds and wide-awakes unnecessarily at such places as Cauterets or Luchon, but keeping to our work—not until we do this, but when we do, we shall create a passion for climbing in the Pyrenees that will almost vie with Switzerland.

There is one thing wanting yet—Mr. Packe will excuse our saying it—a more complete guide-book and a better map of the Central Pyrenees; other maps, in fact, like the one in his book, of the district to the south of Luchon. We might ask further, that the next new 'Handbook' or 'new edition,' should tell us more about the high passes, and about the Spanish side of the Pyrenees, which so few of us

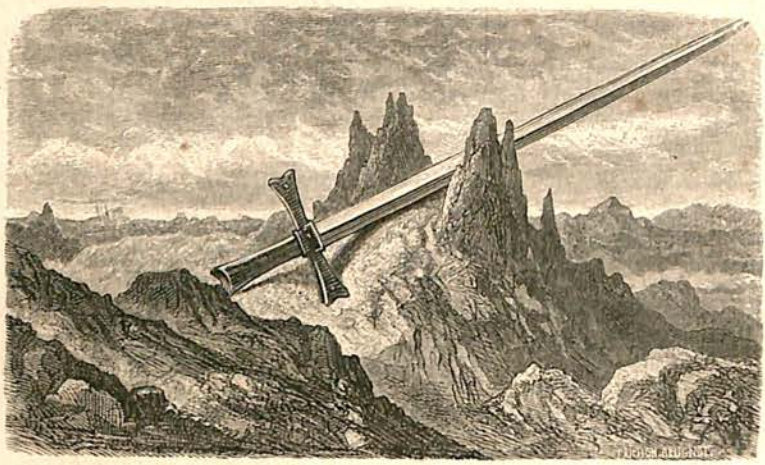
THE CIRQUE DE GAVARNIE.

have leisure or opportunity to explore; and from which the uncertainty of the weather has so often driven people back. At present, there is no modern work that does this completely, or that describes the Central Pyrenees in the same genial, hearty, and enthusiastic manner, that is peculiar to the literature of Switzerland.

The purpose of the present volume being confined to a description of the most popular routes—following in the footsteps of M. Doré—we have been compelled to omit the accounts of excursions of the highest interest and enjoyment, off the beaten track; but which some of our companions may relate in another form at a future time.

We must now say a few words about the Cirque de Gavarnie, and add some notes of an ascent of the 'Brèche de Roland.' This extraordinary semicircle of rocks, called the Cirque—celebrated for its unique beauty, celebrated in the annals of many a smuggling expedition from Spain, celebrated in song, and historically associated with notable men, amongst others with the great French caricaturist Paul Chevalier, who here took his *nom de plume*—rises before us a vast rampart dividing France and Spain, the upper serrated ridge of which, the redoubtable Roland is said, in a legend, to have ridden up to, and cut through with his sword, in his eagerness to pursue the Moors. How he crossed the glacier on horseback is not explained, nor

is the story clear in other particulars, but it is too popular to omit all mention of.



We obtain a good view of the Cirque in half an hour after leaving the inn, but it is a walk of several miles, over a path strewn with rocks and débris before we reach the Cirque itself, or the position on the rocks, where the sketch, on the next page, was taken. There are numerous cascades down the precipitous sides of the rocks, the principal one falling about twelve hundred feet, and there is no sound but that of the waters playing upon the polished marble surface of the rocks, which in sunlight, and especially at sunset, cast the most beautiful prismatic gleams across the Cirque.

'Les seuls habitants sont les cascades, assemblées pour former le Gave.'

This fall is said, erroneously, to be the highest in Europe; it is certainly imposing, but in summer, when most visitors see it, the water is diminished to what scarcely appears a continuous thread. As these cascades appear to better advantage from a distance, it is scarcely worth the trouble of scrambling over the rocks to approach their base, excepting for the purpose of searching for fossils or rare botanical specimens, which are often to be found near this spot; but it is worth waiting until the evening, near the cabin shown in the last illustration, to see the sun's rays upon the spray, when the snow is lighted up with a rose-coloured hue, and the dark masses of fir-trees and the shadows cast across the Cirque, make a sombre foreground.

For the following account of the ascent of the Brèche

de Roland we are indebted to a member of the Alpine Club.

'Left Garvarnie at five A.M., and stopped at the little inn near the Cirque, where we got a guide, and set off for the ascent of the Brèche de Roland. Any way up the steep face of the rock, just opposite the waterfall, seems quite impracticable; but you find hand-and-foot hold of a buttress that is formed of slabs of rock, which appear set on end; and up the crumbling wall you toil for an hour until you gain its top, when the walking becomes easy, over smooth slabs of rock and green patches of moss. All around the ground seems to have been subjected to some immense volcanic action; the curious position and shaly burnt look of the rocks and boulders were remarkable. The view hence is very fine, the waterfall especially looks to great advantage from the heights, and the snowy masses of the Vignemale and the Mont Perdu, are a fitting background.

'We soon lost sight of the Cirque, with its streaming glaciers and dark battlements, and began the ascent of a long slope of snow, the Brèche lying to our left. This appeared going out of the way, but the steep angle at which the glacier that leads up to it is inclined made it necessary to turn it. Having arrived nearly at the top of the slope, we turned sharp to the left, cutting steps sideways in the glacier. This was slow,

hot, tiresome work, but it is soon crossed, and in a few moments you reach the Brèche de Roland. The view is very fine—on one side France, on the other side Spain—lying as it were at your feet; the Pic du Midi de Bigorre, conspicuous to the north-east; to the south, mountain on mountain, and valley on valley, stretched away for miles over the Peninsula, its hazy, stony and barren appearance being most remarkable.

'On descending, we saw the cavern where people sleep on making the ascent of Mont Perdu, which mountain lay to our left; then, recrossing the glacier, descended the snow-slope by a glissade, and afterwards the wall of rock (coming down being much more fatiguing than going up), reaching Gavarnie about four P.M.'

Taking advantage of a return carriage the next day, which had brought some visitors to Gavarnie, we soon rattle down over the newly-made road, and past the wonderful chaos, to St. Sauveur and Luz; in time to join a party who are going to ascend the 'Pic de Bergons' to see the sunset. It is one of the easiest, and at the same time one of the best worth undertaking, of any mountain excursion in this part of the Pyrenees. From the summit (only 6791 feet) we see to the south, the Mont Perdu, and the Brèche de Roland above the Cirque de Gavarnie, and obtain the best general view of the range of limestone

mountains that forms the crest or 'backbone' of the great chain.

We will not detain the reader with details of this ascent, which, although wild and striking in parts (especially where M. Doré has taken this sketch),

ASCENT OF THE PIC DE BERGONS.

presents no difficulty, and admitted of few adventures beyond slips and tumbles, and a long chase after a

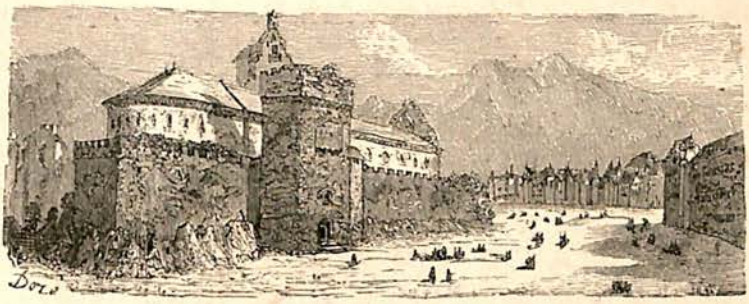
wide-awake, which a sudden gust of wind whirled upwards and over a chasm.

It is a most popular expedition, and in fine weather we may see almost as many adventurous mountaineers as in these illustrations; but fine *clear* weather is rare, and we may ascend over and over again without getting any view. We may have been sitting under the trees, or taking shelter from the sun all day in the valley, but no sooner do we get to any altitude than the clouds pursue us like fate, enveloping everything in a damp shroud, through which we cannot see many yards before us, and from which we only emerge on returning to the valley.

It is considered a triumphant thing amongst the habitués of St. Sauveur or Luz to have made an 'ascension' of any kind, but to have seen either

sunrise or sunset under favourable conditions from the Pic de Bergons is almost too much good fortune to hope for on one's first visit. M. Taine discourses thus pleasantly on these 'ascensions':—

'J'étais un jour sur une montagne avec une famille, à qui le guide montrait une ligne bleuâtre indistincte, en disant: "Voilà Toulouse!" Le père, les yeux brillants, répétait aux fils: "Voilà Toulouse!" Ceux-ci, voyant cette joie, criaient avec transport: "Voilà Toulouse!" Ils apprenaient à sentir le beau, comme on apprend à saluer, par tradition de famille. C'est ainsi qu'on forme des artistes, et que les grands aspects de la nature impriment pour jamais dans l'âme, de solennelles émotions.'



ANCIENT CHURCH OF THE TEMPLARS AT LUZ.

CHAPTER VIII.

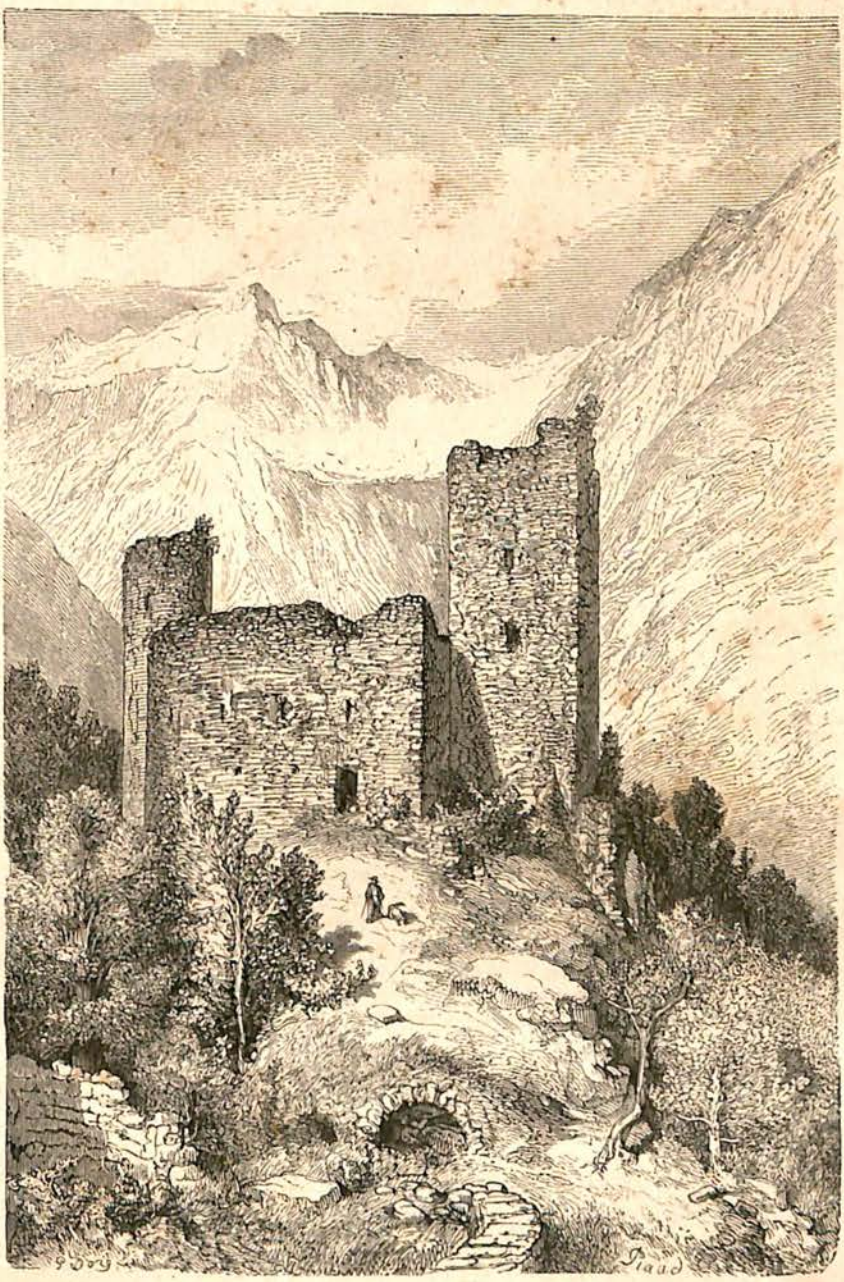
LUZ—BARÈGES—BAGNÈRES DE BIGORRE.

THE situation of Luz, in a large natural basin surrounded on all sides by mountains, is preferred by many visitors to St. Sauveur. It is more open, and the walks are more varied; it is less fashionable and pretentious, and once was much cheaper than St. Sauveur as a place of residence. But partly from its central situation (as may be seen on the map), partly from the fame of Madame Cazeaux's dinners at the Hôtel de France, and chiefly from the report of its cheapness, it has now become dear; and we doubt if M. Taine saw it in its crowded, noisy state to-day, with its modern white houses and hotels, he would be disposed to call it any longer a 'petit village, tout rustique et agréable.'

An old fortified church, built in the time of the Templars, where service is still performed behind its ramparts,[1] and the remains of a chateau which crown the heights, are the chief objects of interest at Luz; but the majority of travellers pay it only a flying visit. The French people prefer St. Sauveur or Cauterets for a residence, and the tourists make it merely a place for a mid-day halt. In the heat of the day in summer, its principal street is crowded with vehicles stopping at the hotels, with horses and guides and hangers-on of all descriptions, with beggars ad libitum, and with any number of pigs.

We scarcely know how to give an adequate impression of the importance of the pigs in a place like Luz. They occupy the principal position in the streets and in the door-ways of buildings, and the inhabitants seem with one consent to give way to them. In driving into the town we must turn out of the way for fear of disturbing a group that are fast asleep in the middle of the road; and when we alight at our hotel we shall probably find a crowd of loungers superintending the operation of washing them in the stream that flows through the street, water being poured over them with a large iron ladle as they repose in

[1] This church and chateau is, in some respects, the most curious and perfect specimen of a mediæval castle that we shall meet with; its ramparts and loopholes commanding the different points of approach from the neighbouring valleys, forming, as Murray says, 'an outpost of Christians, against the Saracens first, and afterwards against the Spaniards.'



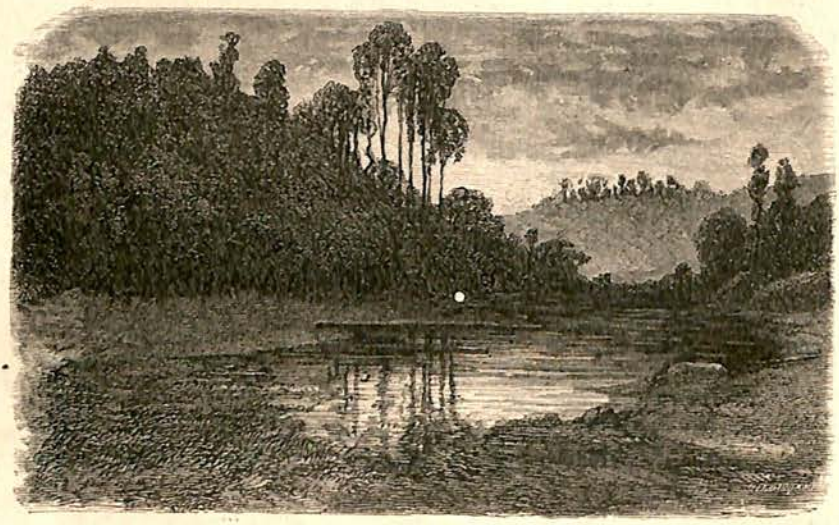
CHATEAU NEAR LUZ.

the sun, submitting placidly to the operation of basting before their time. At Granada, in Spain, every one keeps a pig in the autumn, to fatten for Christmas, and it is considered unlucky not to possess one. The Spanish gentlemen who sit about the doorways here and watch these operations, must be gratified at the adoption of at least one of their customs by the people of Luz.

There is a good carriage-road from Luz to Barèges, the distance being about five miles of continual ascent through a somewhat dreary valley, which is often flooded in spring and winter; giving it that forsaken and ruinous appearance, that we see in the valley of the Rhone near Sion.

As we approach Barèges the mountains close in upon us, and their sides become

more and more barren, the wind blows in gusts, and the air is quite cold in the shade.



THE 'GAVE,' NEAR LUZ.

The situation of Barèges itself seems at first sight the most uninviting of any in the Pyrenees (see illustration at page 201); even the guide-books cannot praise it. Mr. Packe says:—

'The town of Barèges is the sort of place we should expect from the approach, one long street of wretched houses, with a gap at intervals where an avalanche has swept them away and a row of wooden houses has been substituted. Here they sell hardware, cotton-stuffs, and some of the coarser sort of the celebrated woollen Barège shawls, the finer ones being manufactured at Bagnères de Bigorre.

'The architecture of the town is certainly not imposing, and the climate does not more recommend it. Barèges being at an eleva-

VIEW OF THE GAVE NEAR LUZ, AT SUNSET.

tion of 4084 feet above the sea, all the chilly mists of the surrounding mountains here collect, and the wind at times blows down this defile with such violence that for five months in the year the place is uninhabitable. The ground is covered with snow to the depth of fifteen feet, and all the population emigrate except seven or eight of the most hardy, who remain to take care of the houses and furniture, and are kept close prisoners for many weeks.

'The bath establishment is a dreary stone building; sixteen gloomy little cellars, admitting neither air nor light, are set apart for those who can afford the luxury of a private bath, the price of which is one franc, twenty-five cents; and for these there is such a demand that without being registered in the doctor's book you can hardly procure one.'

The waters of Barèges are so much esteemed for their curative properties that the baths are crowded with invalids, and the French administration has established a military hospital here for the treatment of gun-shot wounds and other injuries. It is said

that as many as ten or twelve thousand persons take the waters here during a summer season. It is most disagreeable to the taste and smell, and this, added to the discomforts of a crowded place and a decidedly *triste* situation, does not appear very inviting to a visitor.

But the weather is fine, and warm in the middle of the day, and we find ourselves tolerably comfortable in our mountain lodging, nearly 4000 feet above the sea; in the midst of a community of sick men, old

women, and decrepid, all huddled together on a ledge of rock, like birds in a nest. The stormy winds that blow down the valley in sudden gusts, and moan in the crevices of the rocks, sound rather drearily,

it is true, but what will it be, in a few months' time, when, increased to a hurricane and accompanied with snow, they will sweep away in their winter strength both 'man and his dwelling-place;' and

WINTER VISITORS AT BARÈGES.

Barèges will have a second season, with another class of visitors who are less fastidious perhaps, less infirm, less careful to drink the waters, but otherwise not unimportant, and as certainly to be expected in season as their summer friends.

The presiding deity of Barèges is the 'Pic du Midi de Bigorre.' The inhabitants love, honour, and obey its teaching; they look to it for the signs of the times

and seasons, and the sense of its presence is ever near them. In the lonely track over the Tourmalet, and down the valley of the Adour towards Bigorre, it is continually in sight, and by the movements of the clouds round its summit, or by the sharpness of its outline against the sky, the wayfarer is encouraged or cautioned on his route.

Before we leave Barèges we take advantage of a clear day to see the view from the Pic du Midi, which is considered to be unequalled in the Pyrenees, for its extent. Its extraordinary position, standing considerably northward of the central chain, with no mountains of equal height (9439 feet) near it, and

its accessibility to the summit, render it more worth ascending than any other of equal height. It takes three hours on foot, and nearly four on horseback. There is a clear path, and no guide is necessary.

We first follow the route leading over the Tourmalet, and then, turning to our left, ascend a shoulder of the mountain until we come to a little lake, and a cabin, where it is possible to get a night's lodging. From this point, where we make a short halt, the path leads in a zigzag direction, up the, now steep and barren side, of the Pic, from whence we occasionally obtain distant views of the valley.

The view from the summit, which is at least 1500 feet above the lake, and more than 5000 above Barèges, surpassed all expectation in its grandeur and extent. Our position here was so isolated, that even the vast chain of the Pyrenees, to the south, seemed to be separated from us, and so precipitous were the sides of the Pic du Midi that we scarcely felt as if we were on terra firma. Before us, the solitary Pic de Montaigu, and the plains of France extending into apparently illimitable space, and behind, all the most prominent peaks of the Pyrenees. It was like looking down upon a gigantic *carte relief* map, showing the little towns, the bright green valleys, the dark rocks and the fields of snow. Immediately at our feet there was nothing but rock, but lower down there were slopes of grass, bright with gentian and other wild flowers; the base

or frame of this giant mountain being 'cast'—as Mr. Paris calls it—'in a brown micaceous schist, which, cropping out from the surface in masses, sparkled with metallic brilliancy.'

It is difficult to describe, without repetition, the views from these summits, as they must necessarily have so many points of similarity, but the reader may take the word of every one who has had a successful day for the expedition, that there is nothing comparable to it, at the same altitude in the Pyrenees.

As we said before, it is rare to get a clear day for these ascents; let us now hear M. Taine's account of one on a cloudy day.

'Départ à quatre heures du matin dans la vapeur. Les pâturages à travers la vapeur; on voit la vapeur. Le lac à travers la vapeur; meme vue!

'Commencement de l'escarpement; montée au pas, à la queue l'un de l'autre, chaque cheval ayant le nez contre la queue du précédent, et la queue contre le nez du suivant, comme au jour de sortie aux collèges d'équitation.

'*Première heure*: Vue du dos de mon guide et de la croupe de son cheval.

'*Deuxième heure*: La vue s'élargit; j'aperçois l'œil gauche du cheval du guide. Cet œil est borgne, et il ne perd rien!

'*Troisième heure:* La vue s'élargit encore. Vue de deux croupes de cheval et deux vestes de touristes, qui sont à quinze pieds au-dessus de nous. Ils jurent et je jure. Cela nous console un peu.

'*Quatrième heure:* Joie et transports; le guide me promet, pour la cime, la vue d'une mer de nuages.

'*Arrivée:* Vue de la mer de nuages. Par malheur nous sommes dans un des nuages. Aspect d'un bain de vapeur quand on est dans le bain.

'*Bénéfices:* Rhume de cerveau, rhumatisme aux

pieds, lumbago, congélation—bonheur d'un homme qui a fait une ascension!'

Leaving Barèges and its invalids, it is with a certain sense of relief that we find ourselves once more winding slowly up the Bastan valley, on our way to Bigorre.

On a dull, clouded day (which is very frequent here) the pass of the Tourmalet is dreariness itself, and we cannot get rid of the feeling of being half imprisoned by these gloomy, and apparently tottering, walls that rise before us, cold and desolate-looking, where avalanches have passed down; with deep shadows in overhanging places, so like solid, substantial forms that it was difficult, as Miss Edwards expresses it, 'to believe that shadow could be so real—still more difficult to believe that light could be so shadowy. The little green oases of pasture-land at the valley's base, and the occasional signs of human habitation seeming only to add to its deserted appearance.

The distance from Barèges to Bagnères de Bigorre is nearly twenty miles, but the steepness of the ascent, and the time occupied for resting, make it a journey of about eight hours.

Our path, which is nearly due eastward, passes between the Pic du Midi and the principal chain of the Pyrenees, the Tourmalet forming the connecting

LALY

link between the mountains; and it is not until we reach the col, which takes about two hours and a half, that we get any considerable view, or feel to some extent released from our prison-house.

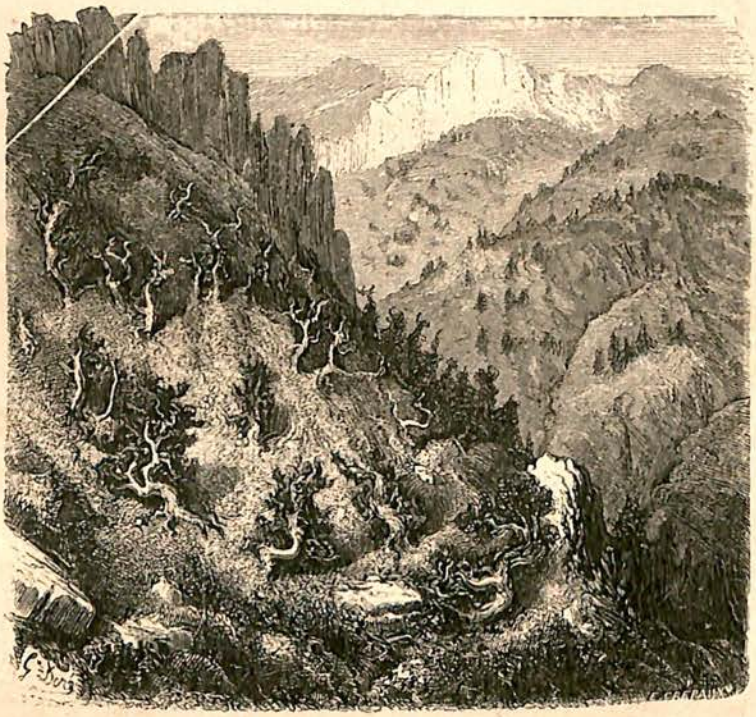
When we have descended for about an hour, by some very steep and rough zigzags cut in the rock, we get a fine view of the Pic du Midi, and are once more amongst pleasant pastures watered by the river Adour, which here takes its rise and which we follow on its left bank almost to Bagnères de Bigorre.

Another hour's descent, and we meet gaily-dressed people, riding and walking about, who seem to us to belong to another world (each valley is so shut in and distinct), and in the little town of Gripp, where we halt, there are carriages that have brought pleasure-parties from Bigorre, whose drivers are clamorous for a 'back fare.'

The situation of Gripp is so picturesque, and the Hôtel des Voyageurs so good and comfortable, that we are unwilling to leave it. Some of our party who have taken up their quarters here for the night in order to start early, by Arreau, for Luchon,[1] where they will await us—have strolled out to visit some

[1] This is the best and most direct route to Luchon from Bagnères de Bigorre over the Hourquette d'Aspin and the Col de Peyresoude (see map). Travellers will find a very comfortable little inn at Arreau, where they can break the journey.

beautiful waterfalls in the neighbourhood. Wishing them au revoir, we drive down the valley in the cool of the evening to Bagnères de Bigorre, rattling



through the streets of the town after dark, just sufficiently lighted to enable us to see the crowd that is walking up and down an 'allée,' shaded by two rows of fine trees, and bounded on either side by cafés and shops.

Bagnères de Bigorre is not only one of the most ancient, but it is one of the largest and most prosperous towns in the Pyrenees,[1] having a resident population of upwards of 8000, besides accommodating in the season 4000 or 5000 visitors. Its situation, neither in the mountains nor in the plains, the cheapness of provisions and other commodities, the moderate rent of houses, the mild saline springs, and the general character of the town for health, combine to recommend it, not only to a large number of valetudinarians, but to that numerous body of English people who reside permanently abroad.

It is a pleasant change to come down again towards the plains and spend a few days quietly in a town; and curious, to find the English language spoken continually, to hear the click of croquet ('le jeu d'arc,' as the French call it), to see cricket bats, and to be asked in English at the shops if we will buy any 'Pale Ale.'

On Sunday morning at the little English church, at the Club, and even in the streets, we might almost fancy ourselves in a country town in England, so familiar and so frequent are the signs of our nationality everywhere.

But if we go into the principal streets on market-

[1] Froissart speaks of it as 'a goodly enclosed town called Bagnères, the inhabitants of which had a hard time of it in 1369, when war broke out between France and England.'

days, we shall see some variety of costume, and meet people of different nations. There are itinerant merchants in Spanish costume, with gay silk ribbons, woollen rugs, &c., for sale; and there are rows of shops for the display of woollen goods, which may be bought here much more reasonably than at Eaux Bonnes or Luchon. An old woman, with a large blanket folded over her head, in a fashion more picturesque than comfortable, one would imagine, offers us ten fine fresh figs for a sou (we have had to pay twice as much for the same at Seville), and young girls with pretty coloured handkerchiefs tied round their heads, sell flowers and fruit to passers by.

If we were to go to market this morning, we could purchase ducks, fowls, and turkeys at prices that would make the British householder envious to hear of; and there is an air of plenty and contentment about the place that does one good to witness.

The people that come in from the neighbourhood in such numbers, that in the evening we can hardly force our way through the crowded allée, look prosperous and healthy; and we cannot help contrasting them in our minds, with the inhabitants of other beautiful valleys, such as at Stachelberg in Switzerland, or at Tintern on the Wye, in which the people, old and young, are absorbed into unhealthy manufactories and confined all day in close dwellings, where, from the nature of their occupation, the windows are

obliged to be kept closed—emerging only in the evening, a long train of pale faces filing off through the rising mist, to return to the mill again before the sun, which only reaches the valley for a few hours, has had time to shine upon them. Happy the people of such valleys as that through which the Adour flows, that they can live and thrive on agricultural labour, and put by for a rainy day, more in one month than a Dorset labourer is able to do in a year.

We spend our days rather lazily, and our evenings pleasantly enough at Bagnères de Bigorre; there is no lack of beautiful walks whichever way we turn, and plenty of pleasant English society in the evening, varied, if we please, by balls, concerts, and occasional performances at the theatre.

The walks in the neighbourhood are delightful; you cannot proceed in any direction for half an hour without coming upon some fresh view of the mountains; and if you happen to ascend by the shady paths behind the 'Etablissement,' or better, by the east side of the valley, you will be enticed on and on, by the gradual opening of the prospect, until you may find yourself high above the valley when evening closes in.

On one occasion we spent the day on the heights above Bigorre, sketching, and watching the changing aspects of the Pic du Midi, as it every now and then

emerged from clouds (which never entirely left it, although it was clear overhead), and were glad of any shade or wood in our path.

As we sat under the trees, there were sounds of voices above our heads, and looking upwards, we discovered men and boys, and even children, perched up sixty or seventy feet high in the air, either on the branches of the trees, or on three poles fixed triangularly in the ground.

Travellers see strange sights; in the Landes there were men literally 'as trees walking;' here they seem to nestle in the branches, and cradle in the wind. They are spreading nets for the wood pigeons that flock to this neighbourhood in great numbers in the autumn months, and are perched up aloft to throw their nets; the poles and branches bending with their weight, swaying back-

wards and forwards in the wind, in a manner that appears most dangerous to the uninitiated.

We had been wandering hither and thither, with that uncertainty which is the delight of a mountain ramble; we had come suddenly upon a flock of sheep, and had had a sharp battle with the dogs in charge of them, which are fierce and almost dangerous when attacked; we had nearly trodden upon a shepherd boy, who lay hidden in the long grass, who had

> 'Fashioned a flute from a willow spray,
> To see if within it the sweet tune lay;'

and who, careless apparently of his flock, and heedless of us, was repeating some quaint Béarnais air from memory. We had passed up, far above pasture land and trees, and gained a point where, if the eye could have penetrated the atmosphere that alone limited the horizon northward, it seemed as if we might have seen half over France; from the west towards the Bay of Biscay, and to the east almost to the Mediterranean shore, we could trace the line of mountains, and to the south a multitude of snowy peaks and promontories. We were rather late in returning, and by the time we had reached the pastures, and the place where the shepherd boy still lay—gazing lazily into the valley and watching his flock careering down the steep slopes—it was almost dusk.

We sit down to rest for a while—to watch the

effect of the sun leaving the highest peaks, whilst the town of Bigorre, several hundred feet below, is disappearing fast from view, and sparkling with little glow-worm lights—when, looking farther down the valley, we see a slowly moving dark line, serpent-like in motion, winding noiselessly through the trees (some monster apparently, attracted by these earth stars), now burrowing underground, and now, as it comes nearer, showing two flaming eyes, and a tail with glittering scales. This monster is a creation of the 'Compagnie du Chemin de Fer du Midi,' and in its sides, there are little lighted cells containing atoms of human life. What, we wonder, does the little flute-player, what do all the children of the mountains, think of steam?

CHAPTER IX.

LUCHON.

'Il est convenu que la vie aux eaux est fort poétique, et qu'on y trouve des aventures de toute sorte, surtout des aventures de cœur.

'Il est également convenu qu'aux eaux la conversation est extrêmement spirituelle, qu'on n'y rencontre que des artistes, des hommes supérieurs, des gens du grand monde; qu'on y prodigue des idées, la grâce et l'élégance, et que la fleur de touts les plaisirs et de toutes les pensées y vient s'épanouir.

"Si la vie aux eaux est un roman, c'est dans les livres. Pour y voir de grands hommes, il faut les apporter reliés en veau, dans sa malle.'—*Taine.*

IN the midst of a broad and fertile valley, with mountain slopes of pasture and wood on either side; amidst groves of trees, from under banks covered with moss and lichen, burst forth the far-famed springs of Luchon; the resort of invalids and 'malades imaginaires,'—from the days when Roman emperors drank these waters and Fabia Festa paid her vow to the god of Lixon, giving the name of Luchon to the little town built near the rocks,

whence the healing waters flowed—to the present time, when several thousand people throng its streets.

Luchon is the favourite resort of nations both north and south of the Pyrenees; amongst Parisians it is one of the most popular of 'Les Eaux,' and even the Prado at Madrid is deserted in summer time for its waters and fresh breezes. It is easily reached, either from France or Spain, nearly all the way by railway, and there are, also, several bridle-paths by which it may be approached. The latter are often taken—just as in the hot summer months the modern Florentine, who is stout of heart and strong in the chest, forsakes

the dried-up banks of the Arno, and even the shadow of Giotto's tower, for the bracing air of Switzerland—making his way, as we have seen him, over the snows

of the St. Theodule to Zermatt—so do certain brave-hearted Madrileños come over by the bridle-paths from Jaca, Pantecosa and the Port de Venasque, and make their sudden appearance on horseback at Luchon.

How shall we describe this shrine—the object of so many pious pilgrimages? Perhaps we cannot do better than compare it, for an instant, with Chamounix, in Savoy, so familiar to most of our readers.

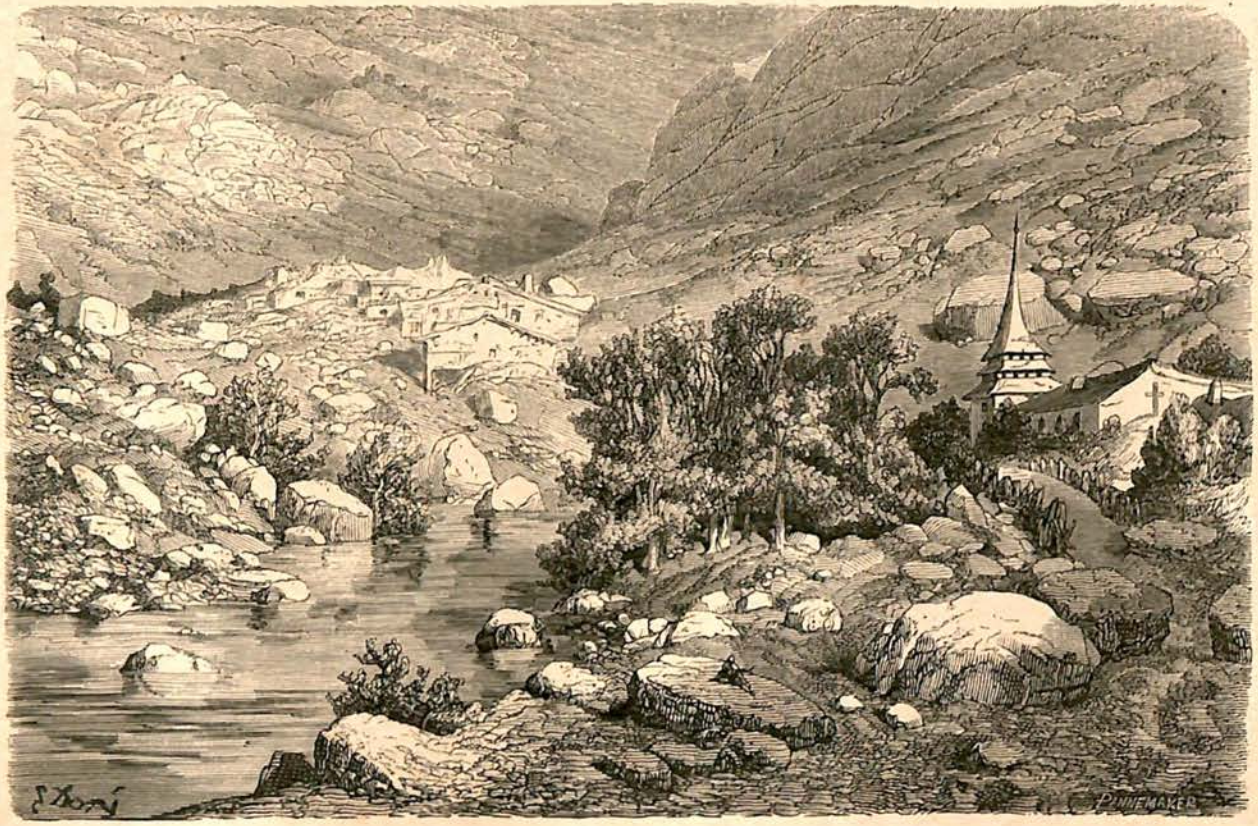
If we can imagine Chamounix, a town consisting of about two hundred hotels and lodging houses, in the midst of a fertile valley, and surrounded with trees; if we can picture (a stretch of imagination, we admit) a little park outside the town, with trim lawns, beds of flowers, fountains, an artificial lake with gaily-painted boats upon it à la Bois de Boulogne, and a pretty boulevard (lighted by gas at night), with trees planted at regular intervals; and if we can further picture Chamounix without Mont Blanc, without its glaciers or any ice or snow, and without its bracing air that is born of them, a place where guides are *raræ aves* and ice-axes almost unknown; where guns are fired indeed often enough—not to signalise an ascent of Mont Blanc, but of a fire balloon; where kid gloves are more the *mode* than suits of tweed, and where Frenchmen take the place of Englishmen in native esteem—we get some idea of Luchon.

There is a certain similarity in the two places; they are both the head-quarters from which to make excursions; both are situated on rivers in the midst of a broad valley, with high mountains each side. There is a drive up to the end of the Val de Lys, as to the Col de Balme; and there is a climb, to the Port de Venasque, nearly as steep and precipitous as the Breven, with a view therefrom (see page 275), of the Mont Blanc of the Pyrenees with its snowfields and glaciers.

The comparative heights, &c., of the two places are thus—but the snow-level is more than 1000 feet higher, in the Pyrenees—

	Height above sea-level.	Average height of surrounding mountains.	Average temperature.	Population about
LUCHON	2064	8000	52° Fahr.	3000
CHAMOUNIX ..	3300	11,000	37° Fahr.	3000

The town of Luchon, as far as visitors are concerned, consists chiefly of one long street planted with trees, and lined with hotels, cafés, lodging-houses, and shops. At the upper end is the little park just mentioned, with the Thermal Establishment, a handsome building erected close under the mountain-side, and in front of which is the principal promenade. The



ENVIRONS OF LUCHON.

opposite end of this street, called the 'Allée d'Etigny,' leads to the old town of Luchon, and to the road down the valley towards Toulouse.

The noise, dust, and bustle, in the Allée d'Etigny in the height of the season, when more than a thousand visitors are added to the native population, is extraordinary. There are several wide roads leading from it, and many châlets and houses dotted about the plain, but as it is the fashion to live in the Allée d'Etigny, the crowd is concentrated on this narrow little slip of land, whether riding or walking, gossiping or dining, reading or sleeping—day or night, there is hardly any peace upon it.

The scene is a brilliant one on a bright sunny day, with the perpetual movement of the gaily dressed crowds of French and Spanish holiday loungers. There is more local colour and variety here than at Eaux Bonnes; there are more Spaniards, more red berrets, gay sashes, and more striking feminine costumes. The shops are filled with Spanish wools and Parisian goods; signboards are festooned from the trees, and a thousand coloured objects arrest the eye. The middle of the roadway is crowded with carriages and horses; the trappings are gay, of course, and the drivers not the least dandified of the party. The horses or ponies they ride, or drive, are little, lean, attenuated animals, of a breed unknown elsewhere, averaging about fourteen hands high—narrow-chested

and stiff-looking like wooden toys, certainly not worth more than 3*l.* or 4*l.* a piece. But how they scamper all day up and down this Allée, jingling their little bells; how their drivers shout and crack their whips, asking less and less for a 'course' as the sun goes down; and how popular they are, in spite of the danger to life and limb as they career along, is something almost indescribable.

All this we see at a first glance as we drive at a hand gallop up the avenue, and with shouts and cracking of whips, turn into the courtyard of the Hôtel d'Angleterre.[1] It is situated about the centre of the Allée d'Etigny, in a pleasant little garden, slightly sheltered from the road, and we are fortunate at this time of year in getting good rooms at the back. We are near the stables, and there are fowls and pigeons and peacocks in the courtyard, all favourable to early rising, but preferable in our estimation to a too close proximity to the noisy little boulevard.

The hotel is full of visitors, chiefly 'pensionaires'—French and Spaniards, and two or three English—all very merry and sociable, methodical in their habits of early rising, taking baths and exercise; and punctual

[1] The Hôtel 'Bonne Maison' is in the best situation in Luchon, but we have always found it dear and crowded, and prefer, in common with many others, the comparative quiet of the 'Hôtel d'Angleterre.'

to a fault in assembling to breakfast at ten, and dinner at half-past six.

We have not been many hours in Luchon when we are besieged with enquiries as to what '*ascensions*' we have made, and it is quite clear that we shall have no peace until we have gone the 'regular round.' But before exploring the environs, or indeed going very far beyond the little 'parc,' we must see more of the people. The excursions to any great distance, or height, will generally be performed alone; for there is not time to go far between breakfast and dinner, and who could be absent at such times, especially pensionaires, who pay by the day?

It is about eight o'clock on a summer's morning when we first walk out in Luchon. The mountains look fresh and green from the late rains, little flakes of cloud just touch their tops, and here and there some detached portions float down and nestle amongst the trees, or on projecting slopes of grass, where we can distinguish (through a telescope) sheep grazing, and children gathering wood into the winter châlets.

The streets are full of bathers hurrying to and from the 'Etablissement,' and as it is rather too early to see the habitués to perfection, we stroll up the 'Allée des Soupirs,' behind the baths, for a couple of hours, by a steep, smooth path through a wood, towards Super-Bagnères. Every five minutes that we keep ascending we get more lovely views of the valley, and of

the peaks that rise on every side above Luchon. The town is almost *under* our feet, so precipitous are the sides of the mountain, and we see little of it besides slate-roofs and chimney-pots, with one straight row of tree-tops peeping through the smoke and steam, that rise from the town. If we were not bound to see the company to-day, we could well spend all our time in sketching here, or in wandering about Super-Bagnères.[1]

It is now half-past ten o'clock. Luchon has taken its bath, has drunk the waters, has breakfasted well, and is prepared to promenade, or to make a *petite excursion;* let us descend to the 'Allée d'Etigny' and see 'the world.' The street is more crowded than ever, and the costumes more brilliant and extravagant than any we have yet seen in the Pyrenees. The general effect of the colours of the figures, on foot and on horseback, is certainly very pretty; and if some of the ladies' dresses startle us a little by their originality—and if we are rather taken aback by seeing a French gentleman in a suit of scarlet, walking along swinging a child's rattle, or riding a diminutive pony, with his legs nearly reaching to

[1] It is a pity that so little is said in English guide books about Super-Bagnères; the distance to the cabin at the summit is only five miles, and it is an easy ascent. The beautiful walks through the forests, which M. Doré has sketched for us, and the panoramic view from the summit, taking in the plains of France on one side, and the Maladetta on the other, are well known to those who stay at Luchon.

PATH LEADING TO SUPER-BAGNÈRES.

the ground—the *tout ensemble* we must admit to be charming.[1]

Here is a group just starting for a ride, and what strikes us most of all is, perhaps, the size and length of spike of their spurs, the formidable weight of their whips, and the insignificant, meek-looking little animals they are going to mount. Four French gentlemen are about to ride a few miles up the valley, and the concourse to see them start, and the interest taken in the matter, is wondrous. There are perhaps two hundred spectators on foot, and fifty men and boys on horseback waiting for hire. These last keep up a constant shouting and cracking with their whips, which irritates the ear like irregular line firing. The start takes about half an hour, but the crowd is an admiring one, and in no hurry. One aged cavalier relieves his mind by playing on a horn, another, by dint of spurring and reining in his steed, performs some exciting gambols; whilst the other two, who are younger men, are arranging the thongs of their whips in graceful knots round their bodies. Oh! the costume of young France; the superb top-boots and gilt spurs, the velveteen coat, the white satin waistcoat and scarlet tie, the red velvet jockey-cap with a

[1] With the remembrance of certain dreary-drab costumes, in which some of our countrywomen think it prudent and 'sensible,' to travel abroad, we shall be almost converted to the fashions of Luchon.

feather in it, and the long white whip; and then the *coup d'œil* when all are mounted, and the crowd gives way to let them pass, the air with which they move slowly by, each cavalier with his elbows well turned outwards, and his hand placed bravely on his thigh!

With the departure of the cavalcade the crowd disperses, the majority tending towards the park, or 'English garden;' where, under the shade of the trees, by the aid of sirops and ices, and to the sound of falling water, the next few hours may be dosed away.

It would be almost impossible to give to any one who had not seen the Bois de Boulogne near Paris within the last few years, a just idea of the ingenuity displayed in turning the bed of a mountain valley, covered but a few years since with débris (as seen in the illustration at p. 223), into a perfect promenade and miniature park, with its artificial lake, dainty walks lined with acacia trees and beds of flowers, real waterfalls imprisoned and turned into 'cascades;' fountains and grottoes, châlets and arbours—all designedly pretty and in order. The little boats that pass to and fro on the lake, trail their awnings in the water, purposely, to reflect their bright colours; and the Swiss châlets on its banks, and the houses in the town —white, with green shutters and red curtains at their windows—are all decorated with an eye to the picturesque.

As the afternoon draws on, there comes an almost continual sound of wheels, and horses' feet; the jingle of bells, and cracking of whips, drown the noise of the cascades, and clouds of dust now roll down the valley, marking the track of the returning stream of carriages.

It is only four o'clock. Why do they return so soon?

'*C'est le temps de la promenade.*'

Is it then *all* 'promenade'? But let us follow in the direction of the people that we see assembling on a raised walk near the Etablissement, where a brass band is evidently the centre of attraction, and around which the numerous chairs are fast becoming occupied. The gaiety of this afternoon promenade is even more striking than that of the morning, and we are introduced to many fresh varieties of the 'butterfly' species.

How we all wander up and down, and gossip and flirt, and pay no attention to the music, may be easily understood by those who have gone through a course of Horticultural Fêtes in London; but how we dress, how demonstrative and how brilliant we are in this clear bright sunny air, can hardly be conceived at a distance. Nor can we altogether picture to the reader the effect of the Señoras and Señoritas who have doffed the charming black mantilla and red camelia in the hair, and come abroad in all the glory of

modern Parisian costume; nor the knowing little hats with peacock's feathers worn by the pretty *Parisiennes;* nor the children—children only in size and love for bonbons; nor the Spanish dons in white paletôts and chimney-pot hats; nor the dogs, whose paradise of 'whelping and wagging of tails' is clearly not here, for they also are on good behaviour, and can do neither one nor the other. They are muzzled, wrapped in flannel, and carried in baskets, and generally so clipped and washed that in appearance they belie their origin. There is a diminutive poodle before us now, by nature 'fluffy,' that some whimsical but unkind master has shorn close and clean, all but his head and his tail; and thus does this little atom of a pink body totter up and down, carrying his enormous shaggy head and equally ponderous tail.

Before five o'clock, the numbers increase to a crowd, and at this fashionable hour the habitués—what in modern slang would be called the 'swells'—make their appearance.

There were two figures who always walked arm-in-arm together, and came on the scene about this time, who were as familiar to us as the rocks and the trees; one a tall Spaniard, faultlessly dressed in a black velvet costume of the time of Charles II., with black silk stockings, shoebuckles, collars, and ruff. His friend, a Frenchman (we presume as a contrast),

was the most perfect presentment of a Smithfield cattle-drover it has ever been our lot to encounter abroad, the intention of the 'get up' being to signify a gentleman who was fond of 'le sport,' and as such he evidently found favour amongst the ladies. These two young gentlemen carried everything before them. They were 'in society,' they knew everybody, and disported themselves in the park every afternoon, to the perfect contentment of Luchon.

The band plays badly, but it does not matter: we come to see, and not to hear. It adds, however, to the dramatic effect, and it is difficult to get rid of the idea that this raised platform is not the stage of some Italian opera, with all these gay moving figures the performers; the background the scenery to 'Guillaume Tell,' and the audience the group seated on the chairs.

But it is not all gaiety. If we look about us a little we shall see at this time of day numbers of strangers who occupy the chairs; for, just as the heat of the sun at noon draws forth myriads of insects and atoms of mysterious life, so does this afternoon promenade attract to it visitors that we seldom see at any other time.

Amongst them are the ennuyés—'ennuyés parce qu'ils ont trop de fortune et trop peu de chagrin'—men of middle age, and old, in as great numbers,

and put to as great straits in the task of killing time, as we have seen in any city in Europe. Old and faded dandies, preserved with the greatest care and made 'youthful for ever' by art, lounging away their days in that difficult time between *déjeûner* and *dîner*, alleviated only by this afternoon promenade, which may bring with it, perchance, a timely little flirtation, or something exciting to read in the 'feuilleton' of the 'Petit Journal,' which is sold to the company for a sou. Curious anomaly of life!—strange indeed that men should wish to kill the hours and not the years; that those who find most difficulty in getting through the day, should above all others dread growing old!

Some of the French women that we meet with at these watering-places, on the contrary, are very merry and industrious; they knit and knit as if for their very lives. The family group near us, consisting of *maman* and her four daughters, are shouting with laughter; they are delighted with bonbons and with the gambols of a pet poodle. Their happiness is harmless, and certainly unique; but the majority of the people at Luchon are, truth to tell, suffering from the terrible 'ennui.'

Is this really so? Is it possible that in the midst of beautiful scenery, in a delightful climate, and surrounded with every luxury, we can be weary of existence; or, with so many resources, be at any loss for a topic of conversation?

Let us take the testimony of a Frenchman. 'Avancez et écoutez,' says M. Taine, to two people who have just sat down:—

'Le monsieur est arrivé avec entrain; il a souri finement et avec un geste d'inventeur heureux, il a remarqué, qu'il faisait chaud. Les yeux de la dame ont jeté un éclair. Avec un sourire ravissant d'approbation, elle a répondu que c'était vrai.

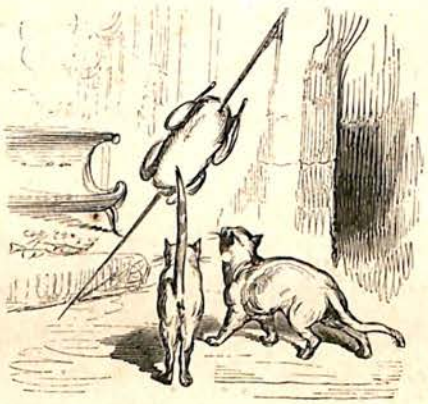
'Jugez comme ils ont dû se contraindre. Le monsieur a trente ans—il y a douze qu'il sait sa phrase. La dame en a vingt-deux—il y a sept ans qu'elle sait sa phrase. Chacun a fait entendre trois ou quatre mille fois la demande et la réponse. Pourtant ils ont eu l'air d'être intéressés—surpris!'[1]

* * *

But the time draws near six o'clock, and there is a sound of relief; and up and down the Allée d'Etigny

[1] What a characteristic contrast to the bored young Englishman at Chamounix. His resources are not great—he is not *stoïque*, but he cannot help being energetic. 'We were compelled,' he writes home, 'to spend ten days of our time unprofitably at that modern Capua, Chamounix—bargaining for artificial agates, eating heavy dinners, racing to the Montanvert against time, and feeding our imaginations on all sorts of ambitious schemes against the neighbouring passes and peaks.'

alarm bells are rung as if there was a general conflagration. It is needless to add that Luchon listens with willing ears to the voice of the charmer.



After dinner we go again to the Parc, and stroll about amongst the crowd, which is much more numerous and miscellaneous in its character.

The inhabitants of the old town, whom in our gaiety we had altogether forgotten, now join the throng. Groups of peasants—men and women, and hundreds whose occupations are to minister to the various wants of the visitors, now take their evening holiday, and promenade and romp, or listen to the band.

We all keep to the paths and principal walks, enjoying the cool evening air, and watching the sun's rays as they linger on the peaks on the eastern side of the valley, whilst at Luchon itself it is nearly dusk.

As soon as it is dark the gardens are prettily lighted

by gas, fire balloons are sent up, rockets fly about, and dancing *al fresco* is commenced; and it is then, when the mountains are hidden from sight, and there is nothing to remind us of their presence, that we see how perfect is the likeness to the 'Bois de Boulogne' or the 'Champs Elysées.' It is also perfect in its

similarity to Paris in the various little out-door amusements, of roundabouts, 'tir au pistolet,' little games of chance, and the various devices for getting rid of small change, for which the Champs Elysées are famous.

To complete the illusion, we pay twopence for a chair, and six sous for 'La Presse' of yesterday (which has just arrived by the evening post), and listen, as well as we can in the hubbub, to a rather harsh interpretation of some well-known operatic airs, which

comes from an elevated wooden kiosk hard by. The shrill discordant sounds of some of the notes we attribute to the dampness of the little wooden house in which, pending the erection of a 'grand casino,' some of the stringed instruments are kept.

But we are not to be left long in meditation, we (visitors) are all, as we said before, essentially dramatic, and have our parts to fill; if we are good for nothing else, we can buy flowers and sugarplums as long as our purse holds out, and contribute something for the general good.

We had done our duty this evening—we had bought little books of native costume which were utterly untrue, we had bought red 'berrets' which we could not wear, we had steadily refused, and afterwards purchased, knicknacks and bouquets innumerable and inconvenient to carry; and now, having successfully resisted a demand to pay twice for the same chair, and having lighted a last cigar, would be at peace.

But it is not to be. A neat little woman, with a white apron, a shining face, and a white handkerchief round her head, suddenly makes her way through the crowd, and bringing a chair, seats herself close beside us. She has brought with her a small round box, which placed on end makes a table; it is gaily painted, fitted at the top with a little brass roulette, and lighted with a well-trimmed lamp.

With a brief introduction, and the faintest apology for intruding upon 'Monsieur,' she commences conversation; and in less time than it takes to write it, the whole history and gossip of Luchon, of its distinguished and undistinguished visitors, has been told, and told so well, and the family trials and hopes of 'son mari' and 'les petits enfants,' are so skilfully interwoven into the story, that we find ourselves, unconsciously as it were, in the confidence of this little woman, and could no more put her off with a word, or explain that we hate bonbons and never gamble, than we could cut our best friend.

And now will not Monsieur begin—see, all the wheels are spinning? And so we follow suit and turn the wheel like men. The chances are dead against us, of course, but what matters it that the wrong numbers always turn up—what heed of the feigned astonishment on the patient face at our side? Before the light goes out we shall have an empty purse and a pocket full of bonbons, and perhaps have made a home happy.

These games of chance are considered the especial 'fun of the fair,' and every one joins in them. Look at the party of little girls seated in a circle near us; and kneeling on the ground before them a grey-haired mountebank, dressed in a half Spanish, half Basque, costume, who is telling them love stories,

and enlivening the dull parts with interludes of a little game of chance, which might in the half light be thimble-rigging, but which is innocent enough; and when the band leaves off playing, and there is a general movement homewards, see with what a gentle, courtly grace this knight of other days takes leave of his friends with an 'au revoir.'

It is now past nine—in half an hour the Parc will be deserted, and at ten, Luchon proper will be in bed.

It is worth while, by way of contrast to all the gaiety that we have just witnessed, to take a walk one day through the old town of Luchon. It is only a few yards, down the 'Rue de Commune,' to the old 'Champ de Mars,' the site of the ancient baths, the abode of squalor and wretchedness, confined in narrow streets and tottering houses; where we see half-clad women peeping from dark recesses, and children and pigs wallowing in the mire.

It is quiet here; the people seem listless, hopeless, and quite careless of their gay neighbours, content to exist by the produce of a little field work, and a little begging. The line of demarcation is stronger, and the want of sympathy greater between class and class, than we could have believed possible in so small a place. There is no particular enmity or envy

apparently, but carelessness—the carelessness of gaiety on one side, of apathy on the other.[1]

In one point only—the only one we can touch upon, as we, lookers-on, have more to do with their outward aspect than with their social or political life—do they beat their livelier neighbours hollow, they are ten times more 'picturesque;' meaning by that word which we have had to use so often in these pages, something—that in all the really pretty groups in the Allée d'Etigny, in all the bright costumes (some of them conceived in the most perfect taste, and with true feeling for colour), has not once been achieved; something, in short, that in nature is everywhere, but which, both in buildings and in the figures about them, no matter of what nation or costume, cannot exist without harmonious contrasts, repose of colour, and a certain amount of age. We hover continually between two extremes—Murillo's dirty beggar-boys playing in the sun, or a fête champêtre on the stage; both groups having the same set mountain scenery, the former harmonising with it, the latter never.

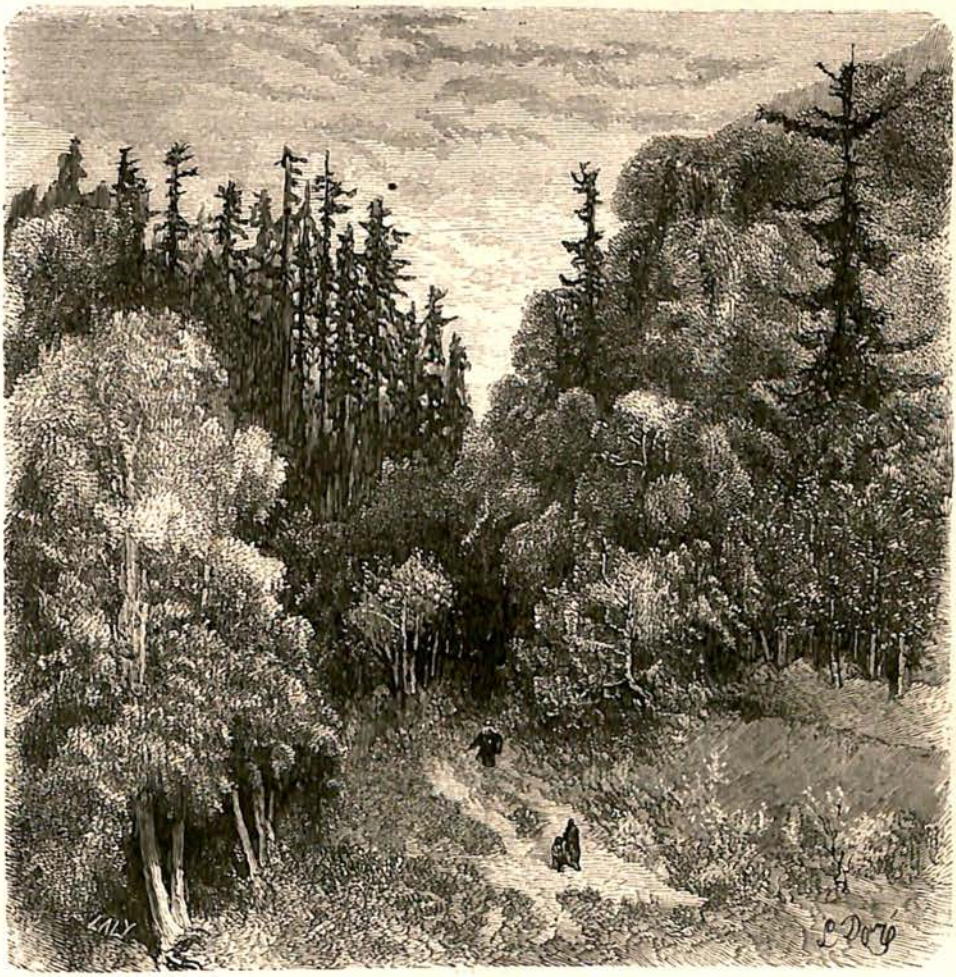
On one of the hot sultry days that we often

[1] It would be unfair to the inhabitants of these valleys to leave an impression of an utterly forsaken race, for there are evidences of industry and of a certain amount of education amongst the better class of Luchonais, which a paternal government, and the wealth spent annually in this valley has greatly assisted to develope.

experience in this valley, we may visit the large white stone building with the imposing façade, called the 'Etablissement,' but we shall find it, although handsomely decorated in the interior, very inferior in arrangement to similar establishments at the German Spas; and the odour of the waters, and the close hot smell in its corridors, will soon drive us away. In the upper part of the building there is a model of the Central Pyrenees on a large scale, which, although poorly executed and inaccurate, gives us from a bird's eye point of view an excellent general idea of the relative position and heights of the mountains.

The atmosphere is so close and hot sometimes at Luchon, that we can do little in the middle of the day besides sit about in the garden of the hotel looking on to the road, or stroll into the beautiful woods hard by.

But there is plenty to amuse us, if we remain at our own doors. At the windows of the white houses opposite we may see Spanish women seated, working, or leaning out upon red cushions, which gives the street quite an Eastern effect, and every now and then there is an 'arrival.' If perchance it should be by the mountains, if some intrepid Señor, having braved the mountain journey, rides up the Allée, preceded by his guide; suggesting in his imposing appearance and portentous mien,



"Tout en haut, entre les troncs, brille un pan de ciel blue ; l'ombre et la lumière se coupent sur la mousse grise comme des dessins de soieries sur un fond de velours."

Bon Gaultier's lines, in the ballad of the 'Broken Pitcher'—

> 'When up there rode a valiant knight,
> From the town of Oviedo,
> Alonzo Guzman was he hight,
> The Count of Tol-lol-ledo'—

we are delighted at the 'distraction,' and throng round to watch the proceedings with an air of intense interest.

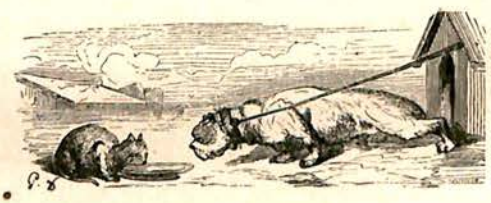
We amuse ourselves with feeding the peacocks in the garden, we read the one local paper over and over again, and wish heartily, for the sake of an excitement, that a paragraph—stating that the Empress of the French is expected at Luchon—would prove true to-day.

We go out again to the Parc, where 'les élégants, couchés sur les chaises, lisent leur journal, et fument superbement leur cigare,' and endeavour to solve the mystery, why the women of all classes are so much more cheery than the men, why we so seldom meet a sad French woman, why the young ladies never seem tired of discoursing of 'les paysanneries adorables de George Sand,' why their elders are never weary of embroidering, and why (a problem we never hope to solve) nearly every Frenchman we meet, bears a decoration, which might be that of the Legion of Honour!

We stroll up one of the paths through the trees

behind the 'Etablissement,' where the stifling sulphurous air ascends from the vast caverns which undermine the mountain side, and come suddenly upon a French artist, sketching, as we supposed, the valley of Luchon. No, his subject was neither rocks nor trees, neither the distant mountains, nor the sunset in the valley; it was 'Still life,' an elaborate painting on ivory, of grapes and peaches, silver, and dead birds! A 'pot-boiler,' probably, a work of necessity, and more certain to find a purchaser than sketches of mountains or trees, but all of a piece with this artificial life and atmosphere, of which perhaps the reader has heard enough.

The weather is uncertain, but fine enough for short excursions, so we will be off to-morrow to the Val de Lys, bidding farewell to Luchon, where we have seen 'le monde'—'le 'monde illustré,' le monde parisien, and, to be truthful chroniclers—le demi-monde.



CHAPTER X.

VAL DE LYS—LAC D'OO—PORT DE VENASQUE.

THE most popular excursions in the neighbourhood of Luchon are, to the Val de Lys; to the Lac d'Oo; and to the Port de Venasque. Either of these may be easily accomplished alone and on foot, without a guide, but we had better speak of them as they are ordinarily undertaken.

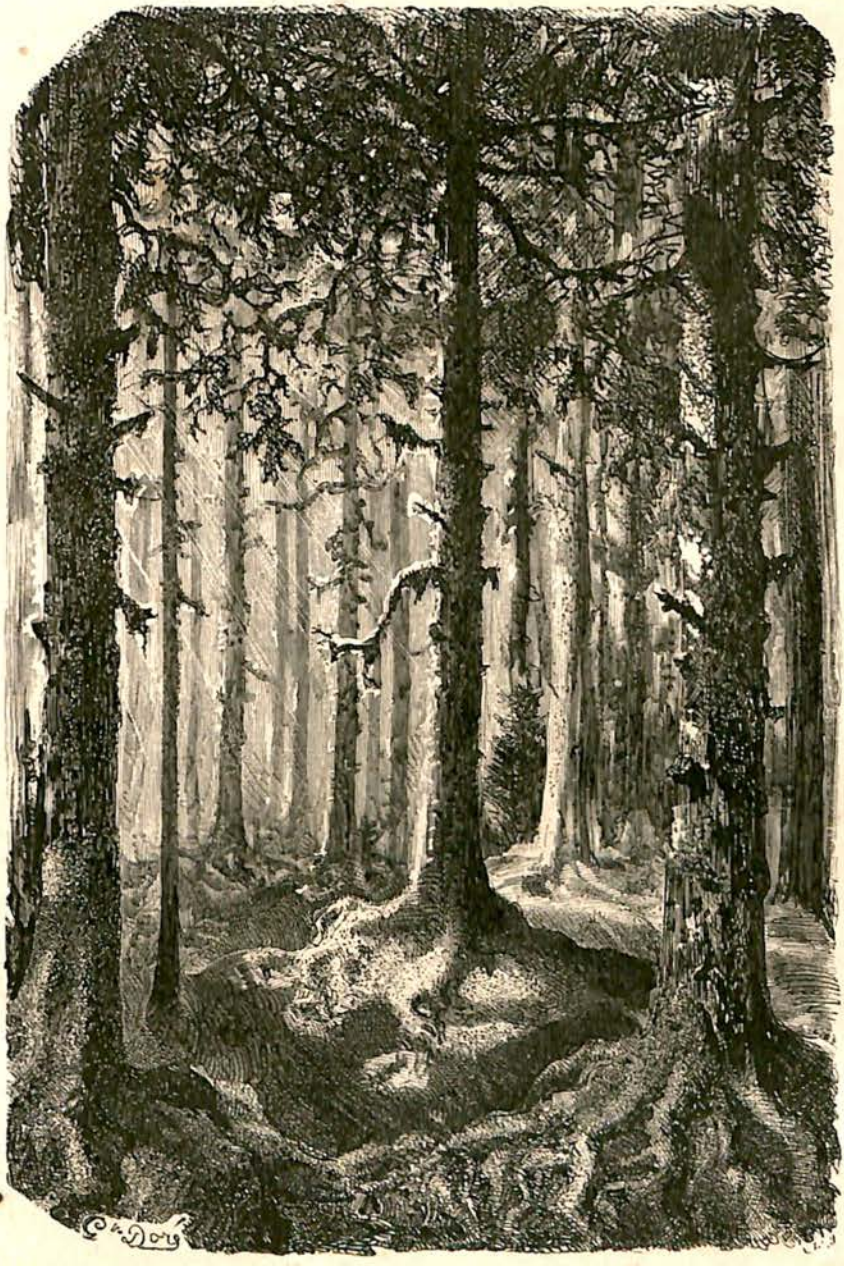
The distance from Luchon to the cabin at the end of the Val de Lys, where the road terminates, is seven miles, and we have walked it leisurely in about two hours, but on this occasion we are going to drive. Having spoken to the master of the hotel the evening before, he promised to provide us with a carriage for the excursion for twenty-five francs, and a *pour boire* for the coachman. We

remonstrated with him as to the charge, but he referred to the inexorable '*tarif*,' and on further inquiry we found that it was considered quite impossible that two, or three, people could go for less.

The next morning at ten o'clock we found a crowd collected round the gates of the hotel, and a four-horse carriage provided for our expedition. It was an imposing equipage for quiet people; the four thin little horses, with their harness decorated with bright worsted tassels, embroidery, and rows of bells, did not, it is true, look very fresh, and were not thoroughbred; but the driver was a great success, with his white trousers, red sash, black velvet jacket, and scarlet berret, as he sat cracking his long thonged whip within an inch of his horses' ears that were too much accustomed to it to flinch. We had happily declined the services of a 'guide,' that is, an attendant on horseback to act as an outrider, which our host explained we ought to have, to show us the different points of interest on the road—that it was the proper thing to do, and that in short it was considered poor fun to go less gaily.

As it was, however, we gallopped off through the town, with whips cracking, bells ringing, the sun shining brightly, and everything looking as gay and important as it was possible, and not dear, as some one suggested, at thirty francs.

In England one is accustomed to experience a cer-



A SUMMER SHOWER.

tain amount of pleasure when sitting behind four horses careering along on a good road, the box-seat on a stage-coach being always considered a privilege; but after two or three summers in the Pyrenees, we venture to think that this pleasure will never be felt so keenly again. The sensation is so frequent, the teams are so poor and spiritless (in spite of their doing ten miles an hour up hill at a spurt), the 'ribbons' are so unsatisfactory to handle, and the animals as a rule know so much better than their drivers what to do, that all the pleasure of driving is gone.

We had chosen the excursion to the Val de Lys first, because the summit of Mont Signac had had clouds hovering about it for the last three days, which the people at Luchon all say promises rain, and we could easily return, or take refuge in the woods if overtaken by a storm.

The sun was hot and the sky cloudless overhead, and we were glad to find ourselves going at a good pace, and to feel a slight breeze; but about half a mile on our way we subsided into the faintest of trots, and at every semblance of a hill, the horses walked, or came to a standstill; the road was dusty, but smooth and excellent, and we put it repeatedly to our 'cocher' whether we might not keep up a trot. It turned out, as it always does turn out in France, that there was a 'règle,' and by that 'règle' he was only

to go a certain pace, and, in fact, to make out his day somehow, between Luchon and the Val de Lys.

In about half an hour we pass on our left hand the ruins of the 'Castel Viel,' an old tower of defence commanding the valleys and the approaches from Spain; its position is faintly indicated on the promontory behind the town in the sketch at page 220. It is one of the picturesque 'bits' that no view of Luchon is considered complete without including, and one of the points of interest near which our driver thinks it proper to halt, and to suggest our getting out and paying a visit. We are content to view it from the valley, our only object in a closer inspection would be to see the old woman in charge, whom M. Taine thus immortalises:—

'Il y avait là une vieille mendiante, pieds et bras nus, qui était digne de la montagne. Elle avait pour robe un paquet de lambeaux de toutes couleurs, cousus ensemble, et restait tout le jour accroupie dans la poussière. On aurait put compter les muscles et les tendons de ses membres; le soleil avait desséché sa chair et roussi sa peau; elle ressemblait au roc contre lequel elle était assise. Si un sculpteur eût voulu faire la statue de la Sécheresse, le modèle était là.'

Continuing up the valley—by an easy ascent on a good smooth road, which our four steeds take at such a deliberate pace that we have time to wander

by the roadside and gather the beautiful wild flowers that cluster everywhere, set in a background of delicate ferns and mosses that grow around their stems, and in the crevices of the cool grey rocks—we get easily and pleasantly over the first few miles, when, without any notice or remark, our sleepy driver suddenly turns out of the road, and comes again to a dead stop. We naturally protest, but in vain, that we should prefer to continue our journey.

'C'est ici le cascade, Monsieur; tout le monde s'arrête, voir les eaux.'

It was useless to object that we had already seen cascades enough to last a lifetime—including the 'cascades des demoiselles,' the 'cascade des parisiennes,' the 'cascade de la lune,' &c., &c., and that we were going to see the 'cascade d'enfer'—the driver and the horses were fast asleep, and there was nothing for it but to get out and go through the ordinary routine.

On the left of the road there was a little pathway that led to the cascade, and we could distinctly hear the sound of a waterfall, where the bed of the valley contracted, and the Gave had forced its way through the rocks, on its passage downwards.

We were not permitted to see the cascade alone, for an old cantonnier (that we had seen breaking stones by the road side) soon made his appearance, and explained that he was the appointed showman,

and that no one could safely approach the rocks without his assistance. We knew that we 'represented a tip,' and were prepared to give it to the old man on our return, but preferred seeing this (as all other sights whatsoever) unattended by any showman.

The old man assented sullenly, and the foremost of our party, following the path to the waterfall, stepped on to the edge of the rocks, which were smooth and covered with spray. In an instant he went down, as if levelled by a rifle from an enemy in ambush, and slid down to the brink of the fall. The remainder of the party who followed him, as soon as they got upon the rocks, lost their foothold, and could neither advance nor retreat without help from the old cantonnier. These rocks, worn smooth by the water, have a peculiarly slippery and greasy surface, more difficult to tread than any glacier, and affording no sort of foothold.

The barefooted old man conducted us all to terra firma, and we soon regained our carriage; having seen a rather ordinary waterfall, having achieved a series of tumbles, and contributed the worth of about two days' pay to the cantonnier.

Another instalment of our drive, now crossing to the right bank of the river, through woods of beech and hazel, and we come, in about two hours from leaving Luchon, to an open space of pasture-land,

where the Val de Lys terminates, almost as abruptly as the valley of Leük, near the pass of the Gemmi.

We now leave the road, and proceed to see more waterfalls. Not many yards from the little cabane where we halt, we arrive at the foot of the principal fall, the 'Cascade d'Enfer,' where, through a perpendicular fissure in the slate rock, the water descends, throwing clouds of spray which almost hide its base, keeping the vegetation near it, in a perpetual summer shower.

We can see far above us amongst the trees, the paths which lead to the upper part of the fall, and on a dizzy height, a little wooden bridge which spans it several hundred feet above, and we can also see through the trees on which the sun is shining brilliantly, little bright objects, which at first sight might be the prismatic colours reflected by the sun shining on the falling water; but which really have more the appearance (so brilliant are they, and so fitful in motion), of coloured lights, playing through painted windows, on a cathedral pavement.

We soon discover that they are the costumes of the equestrians, who are here before us, and who are slowly winding in and out amongst the trees; we are not long in overtaking them, and in being disabused of all romance about the matter. The path is so narrow that one man on horseback more than fills it, and we are forced to clamber up the rocks to make way for those who are coming down. There must be twenty or thirty of them (including the guides), all more or less gaily clad, and all with long whips, which are perpetually getting entangled in the trees.

The effect of these processions, viewed from either above or below (an effect we so seldom get in real life), is worth a moment's notice, especially where for a few yards the path is broader, and we see people riding two abreast; there is so much that is suggestive

and pleasing in the varied colours, and the grace of their approaching lines—seen half in shadow, half in sunlight, amongst the trees—and much, indeed, that is novel in effect; for how few of us ever have an opportunity of seeing a really picturesque cavalcade, without the element of war or the tinsel of the stage.

We may ascend for upwards of two hours, obtaining different views of the cascade and of the valley—notably that from the little unsubstantial, almost aërial, wooden bridge that spans the Cascade d'Enfer—until we reach its source, a much sterner scene, where the glaciers of the Crabioules raise their cold, rigid outlines, against the sky.

Through the trees, as we returned, we obtained many beautiful peeps far down into the Val de Lys, and after passing the second wooden bridge over the falls we left the path altogether, and scrambled down the steep mountain side, on a track where timber had been felled, and there was a clearing. We now got into a cloud (they had been gathering for the last hour almost unperceived), and before we reached the cabin were nearly wet through with the small rain, and the cold mist, that enveloped everything.

On our way down we had seen smoke curling through the trees, and knew that there must be a good fire somewhere, but when we went into the cabin to dry our clothes, there was none to be seen. At

the spot where we remembered to have seen a fire-place two hours ago, there stood, or rather crouched, four or five Frenchmen, all wedged close together, and facing us—a row of human ornaments in high relief. For some minutes no one moved and nothing was said, until at last one of the five commenced a dissertation on rheumatism, and the dangers of the *colique;* and there gradually rose up such a damp odour from these baking Frenchmen that we were glad to retire, thinking of the fine old recipe,—

> 'There was never a herring spake but one, and he said,
> Toast my back before you toast my bone!'

The rain was now pouring down, and the clouds shut out all view, so we hurried into our carriage, and were driven home in less than half an hour, passing groups of drenched equestrians in full retreat. The morning had been so fine that an unusual number of visitors had gone up the valley; great therefore was the havoc amongst the costumes, and all-absorbing the interest at the 'table d'hôte' in the adventures of the day. It was the nearest approach to an excitement that we had yet experienced at Luchon.

For the next twenty-four hours we had a steady cold rain, with a curtain of clouds and mist in front of our windows, penetrating many of the frail wooden dwellings, and rendering them anything but favourable,

one would think, to the cure of rheumatism for which Luchon is so famous.

On the third day the rain ceased, but although cloudy, was considered fine enough for a visit to the Lac d'Oo, and to see the cascades. This time nearly all the visitors making the excursion were either English or Germans, and we got off in a rather more undemonstrative and economical manner. The tariff to the Lac d'Oo was twenty-five francs for a carriage with two horses, but our attentive host engaged, this time, to get us a pony carriage that would take two persons as far as the Cabanes d'Astau, if we would undertake *to drive* ourselves. As the roads in the Pyrenees are generally wide and good, and as the horses in this country, as a rule, drive themselves, we acceded to the proposal readily enough, and traced out the route beforehand on the map.

Leaving Luchon by the 'Allée des Soupirs,' on the road to Arrens, we drove through the valley of Larboust, past several small villages (and a little chapel, an object of great veneration by the inhabitants, dedicated to the martyr St. Aventin), until we came to the village of Casaux, where a sign-post directed us to leave the high road to Arrens and Bigorre, and turn off to the left, now in an almost southerly direction, into a path like the strip of a ploughed field.

The horses paid little attention to their driver, but trotted on when they could get a flat piece, climbed

over mounds, slid down into large mud pools, stumbled over great lumps of rock, squeezed their way through brambles and brushwood, dragging the light cart on four wheels after them 'somehow,' until they came to the village of Oo; consisting of two rows of low houses, between which we had to pass, by a narrow and steep stony street, dark, with low roofs overhanging. In front of a door of one of the houses, which seemed to be filled with manure, and from which the most unpleasant odours issued, our horses came to a dead stop. Our monopoly of the entire high street of Oo created no excitement amongst the poor, listless inhabitants, who were too much accustomed to such inroads. The street was so narrow that no one could get out of the carriage excepting into a window, and in front it appeared so much narrower, that we might have given up all progress as hopeless; but what has been done once, can be done again by a French horse, so with a little persuasion, and the cry '*En route!*' which they understand better than any other interjection, we again jolt and heave over stones and loose obstructions, grazing both sides of the street at once, and sinking into mire, over axle-trees and up to saddle-girths.

Through another dirty little hamlet, past one old castle on the heights which we could just see through the clouds, round the steep side of the mountain, by waterfalls, through woods and lanes shaded with

beech and ash trees, and on paths that Mr. Packe says 'may *just* be taken in a carriage,' and which Murray describes as 'a very narrow and stony horse-path;'[1] we arrive in about two hours at the 'Granges d'Astau,' where the valley is wider, covered with coarse pasture, and strewn with rocks and stones (the bed probably of some glacier in former ages), terminating in a steep ascent to the Lac d'Oo. Here everything on wheels *must* stop, and those who are unfortunately unable to walk, must wait for their friends' return, or be carried up by 'chaise à porteur' at an angle of 45 degrees or thereabouts.

There are several parties on the way before us, and at least twenty people on foot going and returning from the Lake.

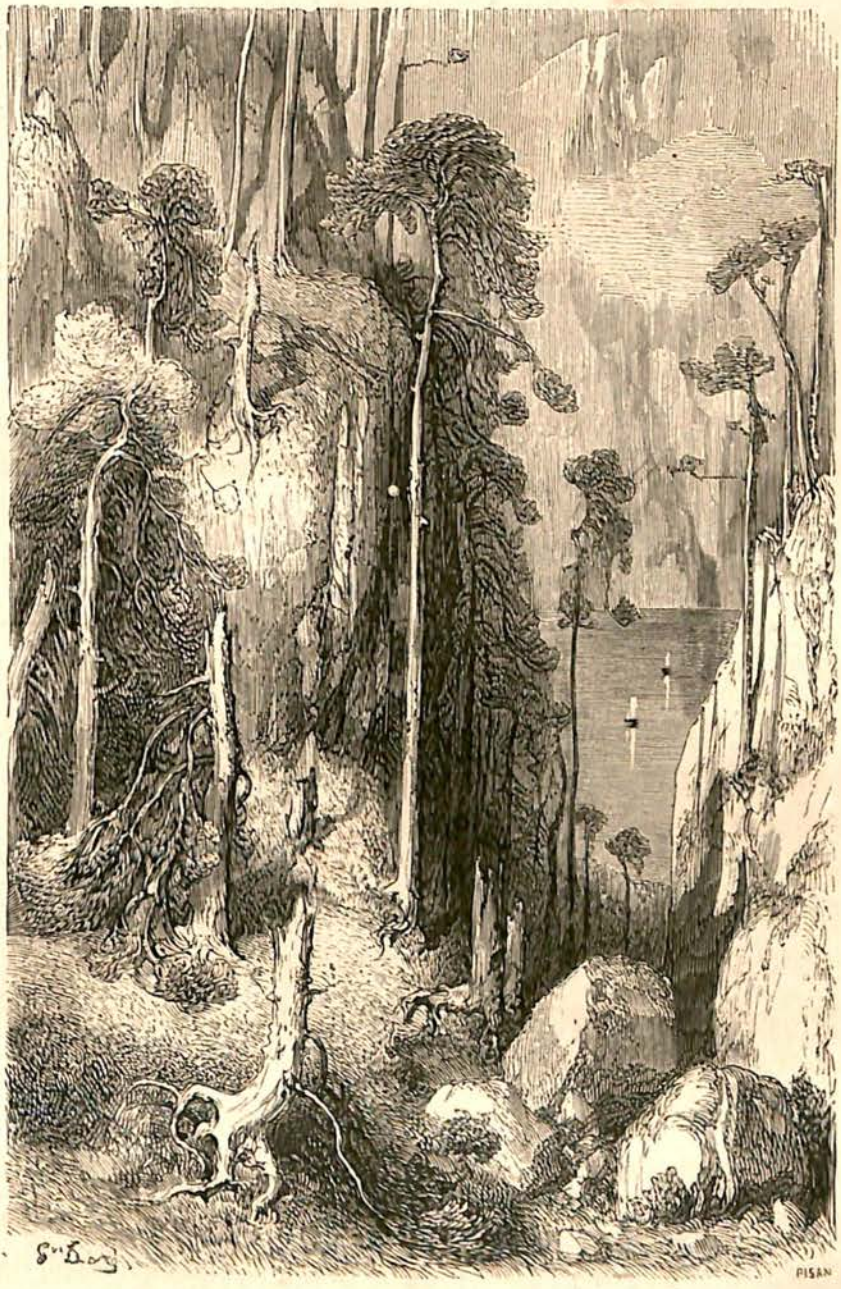
On our journey to the Val de Lys we said something about the picturesque effect of processions of tourists on the mountains—M. Doré has here given us an illustration of something much more prosaic.

[1] It is right to state that this road has been widened and improved during the last two years; but it is still very bad in parts

Parts of this pathway were steep and slippery, the cascades, swelled with the late rains, overflowing the path, which was covered with small streams nearly the whole way up. The sun now shone brilliantly against the polished surface of the rocks, and when we arrived at the Lac the heat was extraordinary, at a height of 4900 feet above the level of the sea.

The Lac d'Oo is completely shut in by mountains, excepting at the narrow outlet to the north by which we approach. The water is cold and clear, and reflects on its still surface the lines of the rocks and the movement of the cascade at the upper end, which falls into it from the glaciers above, from a height of more than 800 feet. This extraordinary mountain lake is half a mile in length, and nearly 300 feet deep, and is so deeply set in the mountains that the sun scarcely ever shines on its surface. The view from the cabin on its banks is so varied—with the changing effects of light and shade on the snow-clad summits at sunset and by moonlight—that no adequate idea of its beauties can be obtained, without staying here for a few days, when the weather is settled and clear.

Two or three beds are made up at the 'cabane,' which are generally to be had by any one who desires to stay, being seldom occupied, excepting by those who make this their starting-point for excursions to the glaciers, and to another 'series of lakes' yet far above us. But the weather is so uncertain in the



THE LAC D'OO.

Pyrenees, that many have been here over and over again, without ever seeing across this lake, and have had to give up all idea of exploring the snow-slopes, or reaching the Lac Glacé, the last of the upper lakes, 8760 feet above the sea. Mr. Packe enumerates, amongst other attractions of this unique spot, that botanists may find upwards of one hundred varieties of plants in the neighbourhood of the Lac d'Oo.

Before we left the lake it was overshadowed with clouds, and the sides of the mountains were hidden to within a few feet of the water. There was no chance of seeing any effect of sunset, and indeed it was hardly safe to linger so late, as the road home, after dark, would have been quite impracticable.

PORT DE VENASQUE.

The journey to the Port de Venasque and the Port de Picade is a longer one, occupying usually ten or eleven hours. We left Luchon soon after seven A.M., taking the same light pony carriage as to the Lac d'Oo (the late rains having rendered the road to the Hospice very bad, in fact almost impassable), but, this time, having a boy with us to take charge of it during the greater part of the day. The road only extends as far as the Hospice de Luchon, a distance of six miles and a half; for the first mile or two in the same direction as to the Val de Lys, past the Castel Vieil,

then turning up a gorge in a south-easterly direction, by a steep road through a wood, until we come again into open ground where the Hospice is situated—a large low building, affording shelter, and rough accommodation, for those who need it on their passage to and from Spain; a dirty, snug, smuggling-looking dwelling, the headquarters probably of all kinds of expeditions, hunting, shooting, pedestrian, and contraband.

Here we left the carriage to wait our return; and, crossing the river Pique (now quite a narrow stream) by a bridge a little below us on the right, we got to work at once, and commenced the wild ascent of the Port de Venasque. From the Hospice we could see our route winding up, in irregular zigzags, several thousand feet above, just visible here and there, as it rounded a promontory, or when a string of laden mules, that were ascending before us, turned the sharp corners and appeared for an instant on the extreme overhanging edge of the mountain side. The path, which led by a more gentle ascent through woods and over green pastures, immediately in front of us as we stood at the Hospice, was the route to the Port de Picade; another and more circuitous route into Spain, by which we shall return.

For the first half hour after leaving the Hospice, we walk over grassy slopes, keeping well under the shadow of the rocks, but we are soon obliged to emerge upon the more exposed part of the path,

where the sun's rays are so powerful that if we had had a guide, we should have been glad to have given him our coats to carry.

As we get higher, still keeping in sight of the Hospice, the air becomes more rarified, and we are surprised to find a wind. The path is one continual ascent, winding up and up without a break, or scarcely an unexposed position on the side of the rock, and we can now easily understand the danger of this pass in stormy weather, and almost believe in the pathetic story of the fate of nine tinkers, who are said to have been carried down by an avalanche. After reaching a spot where we halt for a few minutes by the banks of five little blue lakes that we find nestling in the

mountain side, close to our path, the work begins in earnest, and it would be safer for every one to trust to his own feet. The way, so far, has been one that could easily be taken on horseback in fine weather, but as we near the summit it is nothing but a steep shelving path, cut in the wall of rock, narrow and slippery, covered with loose shale, and here and there some snow. We have to keep quite close to the rocks to get any foot-hold, and can at times scarcely hear each other's voices for a rushing sound, like falling water, but which is only the wind amongst the pines.

We have lost sight of the Hospice for half an hour, and can see neither where we came from nor whither we are tending. At every turn of the zig-zag path the wind becomes more powerful, and it is necessary to make a steady stand against each gust as it sweeps down, bringing with it a shower of small stones, which strike against our faces as sharp and cold as hail; and thus on we plod, with the bright blue sky above, and

clouds and the four little lakes apparently still close to our feet; when suddenly a door opens in the great wall of rock, and we are ushered into Spain by the wind!

The view that has suddenly burst upon us is so magnificent from this elevation, that in spite of the hurricane (for it is here no less, although it is a calm, sultry day in the valley), we steady ourselves by joining hands, and stand in the *Brèche*. The Maladetta, that we have shown in the next illustration, taken from a spot not far below, is the prominent feature, surrounded by the grandest ranges of the central Pyrenees. The intervening valley is desolate-looking, a sort of 'no-man's land'—Spanish soil, indeed, but territory which no Spaniard is likely to take the trouble to dispute possession of.

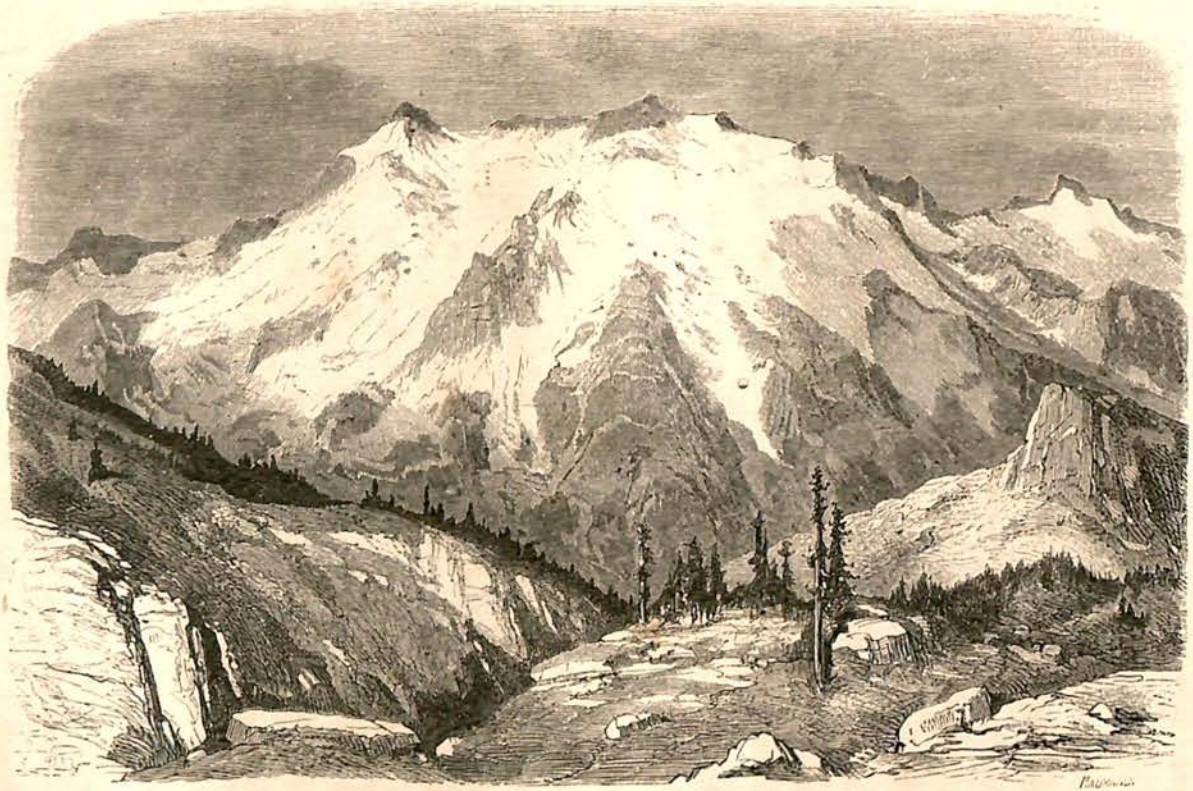
There is one solitary hut that we see below, with just sufficient accommodation to shelter a passer-by, but scarcely to give him a night's lodging with a chance of rest; for the rafters are loose, and the hay that formed a bed for some of our friends (who spent the night here when on an expedition to ascend the Maladetta) was nearly blown away when we last visited it. On the calmest, brightest day in summer there comes up the dark valley on our right hand, that leads to Venasque, a cold and bitter wind—a wind that those who have once felt never forget—the same that haunts to this day the capital of Spain,

and sweeps in chilling gusts through the corridors of the Palace at Madrid.

M. Doré's drawing of the Maladetta is almost photographic in its truth and accuracy of outline, and in giving the sterile desolate aspect of the intervening valley, a scene which has been described by many pens but by few pencils. Its isolated position, and the extent of glaciers and snow-fields, that we can see to best advantage from a point a little above the 'Port' where we attain an elevation of upwards of 8000 feet, give the Maladetta an appearance of height that is quite illusory, and the reader who is only familiar with Swiss mountains may be surprised to learn that the highest peak, the 'Pic de Nethou' (the one on the left in the illustration) is only 11,168 feet above the sea.

Leaving this scene of dreary magnificence, we descend to the cabin, and making a short halt to dispatch a bottle of most excellent Malaga wiñe, we continue our journey, in an easterly direction, keeping close to the spur, or ridge, dividing France and Spain, having the Maladetta on our right hand.

On looking back, we can see with our glass far down into the valley leading to Venasque, and distinguish one or two bright moving specks, which prove to be a party of Spaniards on their way to Luchon; having sent their families and luggage, by a



THE MALADETTA.

détour of several hundred miles, by Perpignan and Toulouse. They do not halt at the cabin, but moving slowly up to the door of rock, silently disappear.

Nothing can be more extraordinary than the contrast between the French and the Spanish side of the Port de Venasque; the latter (called the Peña Blanca, or white rock) shelving up the serrated ridge of a sheer precipice as shown in the following sketch.

THE PORT DE VENASQUE, FROM THE SOUTH.

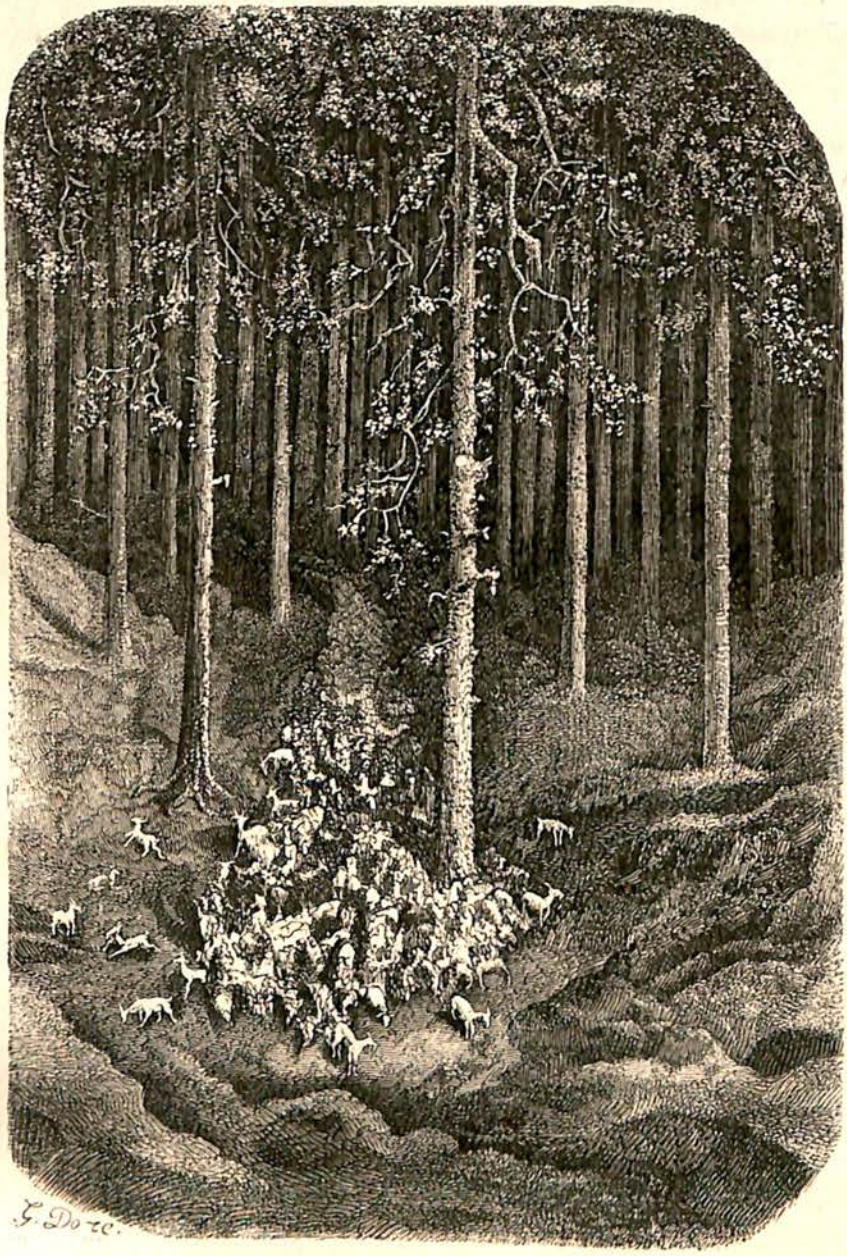
Continuing our route, over rocks and loose boulders and patches of coarse grass, we pass a few huts for shelter for cattle, and meet a number of baggage-mules on their way to Spain, with their drivers in picturesque rags, each furnished with a red sash, and generally a pistol or a knife in his belt—and in about half-an-hour reach the Port de Picade, where we

obtain an altogether different view, looking towards the Catalonian mountains, which is in many respects finer, and more varied, than that from the Port de Venasque. We now re-enter France, and, by a comparatively easy descent, reach the pastures which lead to the Hospice de Luchon.

Here we make another halt, whilst some of our party make a détour to ascend the Entécade, a mountain-peak to the eastward, to which it is not easy to make out the path, without the assistance of a shepherd as a guide. The following note was made later in the year, on a fine October day :—

'On the Entécade you are in the centre of a magic circle of mountains; on the east towers the Maladetta, at least four miles distant, yet seeming but a rifle-shot away, so clearly distinguishable is every crevice and contour. From this point of view, the Maladetta appears even more majestic than from the Port de Venasque, owing perhaps to the greater number of lesser peaks with which it challenges comparison. Turning from the Maladetta towards the south-east, the eye rests on a magnificent range of mountains; with a hundred snow-capped summits visible to the naked eye.

'At the foot of the frontier range of which the Entécade forms part, in the middle of a broad valley, runs the Garonne, its course marked by several little Spanish villages, picturesquely dotted in the green landscape.'


G. Doré

Leaving the open pastures and descending rapidly through a wood, rattling down with a hundred goats at our heels and keeping well to windward of them as a matter of prudence, we arrive again at the Hospice just as the sun's rays are leaving the valley, and the old man and the fowls are going to roost.

It takes some time to find our 'cocher' (who has been enjoying a long nap under the trees) and to get our horses put to, but once started we make up for lost time. The two hind wheels of our little basket carriage are closely locked, the whip is cracked until the lash has a large tuft at the end and will crack no more, and all the izzards, foxes and bears in the neighbourhood are put on the 'qui vive;' the reins are thrown loosely over the backs of our two little lean coursers, and away we go—winding down the side of the valley on the smooth steep road with the silent swiftness of sleighing, the gay trappings and the fox-tails at the horses' heads, flying in the wind and the bells jingling merrily. We nearly knock over one or two peasants with laden mules, and once are nearly overturned ourselves, but are so near the ground, and leaning back so comfortably in our little land sleigh, that we would not slacken pace for the world; and thus glide into Luchon a little after dusk, having made a run of six knots in about half an hour.

And so we end our mountain journeys as we began

them, riding and driving where, according to the muscular theory, we ought to have been on foot, enjoying these excursions much more (to our shame be it spoken) for the little spurt at the beginning and the end.

There are many other walks, and rides, in the neighbourhood of Luchon, of which we should like to speak, but space will not permit; moreover, we are reminded by our French friends that we have done all that is expected of us, and may rest content—that, in short, we may enjoy the 'bonheur d'un homme qui a fait une ascension,' and repose in peace after the labours of the climb.

CHAPTER XI.

ST. BERTRAND DE COMMINGES — TOULOUSE.

BEFORE we left Luchon, the weather began to give unmistakeable signs of breaking up, the clouds came down and took possession of the valley, the rain put out the gas illuminations, and the fire-balloons would no longer go up. It was the end of August, the 'season' was over, and great was the rush to get places in the diligences for Montrejeau. We had taken them a week in advance, or we should have had difficulty in getting away, as carriages were also at a premium; and when our time came we found our diligence loaded, and literally crammed, in every corner. It rained hard as we

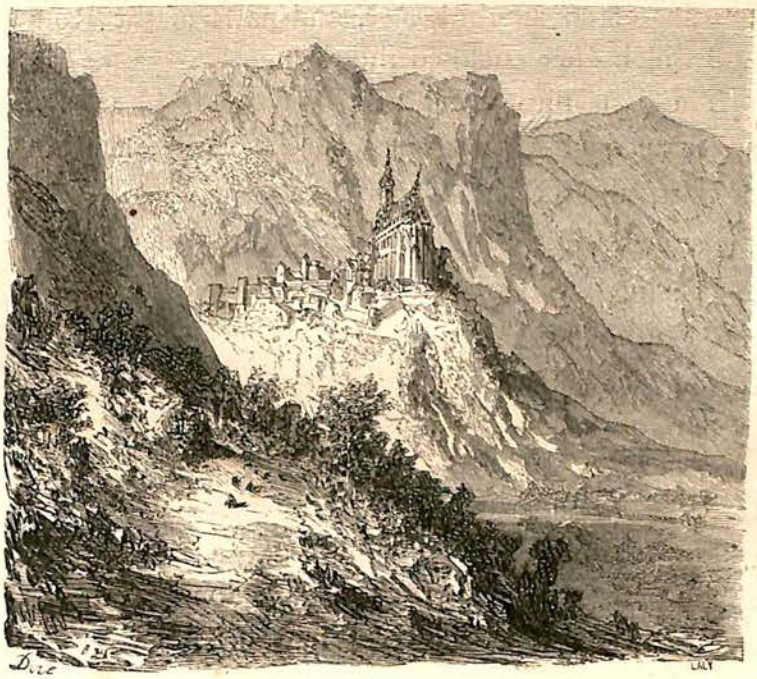
went swaying from side to side down the valley, the mountains hidden from sight, the fields fast becoming lakes again, and sprouting with a sudden growth of huge umbrellas, where the women were gathering their last crop of Indian corn.

About ten miles from Luchon, we join the valley of the Garonne; the river that we passed over at Bordeaux, broad and wide, and laden with ships; and

afterwards saw, from the 'Port de Picade,' a narrow thread of water winding through the Val d'Aran. We are on the high road to Toulouse, but are at present going to make a halt at Comminges to examine, what will be to many of us, the most interesting relics of ancient architecture that we shall meet with in our travels.

THE VALLEY AFTER RAIN.

On the left hand of the road to Montrejeau and Toulouse, where another road branches off to Tarbes, there is a church on a rocky promontory far above the valley, built in the Gothic style of the thirteenth



ST. BERTRAND DE COMMINGES.

century, and dedicated to St. Bertrand de Comminges. The interior is rich in sculpture, carved work, and painted glass, and there is a handsome marble tomb to the memory of the patron saint. The town near it,

which was once a large one, now contains only a few hundred inhabitants; but our interests are more with the dead than the living at Comminges, and we are occupied nearly the whole of the day in tracing the romanesque ruins both in the cloisters of the church and in the precincts of the town, where there are the remains of an amphitheatre, and parts of the Roman wall which once enclosed the town.

The last illustration will give some idea of the appearance of Comminges and its cathedral on the heights, also of the importance of this position to the ancients in time of war.[1]

Leaving St. Bertrand de Comminges, and crossing the Garonne, we arrive at Montrejeau a few miles further down the valley, where we join the railway system of France, and, still following the course of the Garonne, take the train to Toulouse.

Montrejeau, which is soon to be connected by railway with Tarbes and Pau, has long been one of those much dreaded temporary stations where in all weathers, and at all times of day, or night, travellers have been stranded, to wait their turn for the diligences, and have had to put up with the 'temporary' shelter which the wooden shed afforded, or the not much better accommodation to be found in the old town. What travellers have suffered here during the

[1] Historians assert that the cathedral stands on the site of the 'ancient Lugdunum Convenarum, founded by Pompey the Great.'

many years that the railway has abruptly stopped at Montrejeau, will never be known, or much cared for, by those who roll easily past it in express trains from Toulouse to Bigorre.

The train takes us in three hours to Toulouse, and we are quickly installed in comfortable quarters at the Hôtel Souville, with rooms looking on the 'Place du Capitole,' a large open square in the centre of the town, with rows of shops and arcades round it, and on one side the Hôtel de Ville.

Early in the morning we are awakened by a sound which, to our sleepy senses, might be the working of an enormous hive, or the murmuring of the sea upon the shore; and on looking out we find the whole 'Place' (about the size of the Palais Royal) covered with umbrellas of various shapes and colours, and a crowd of people running in and out from under them, like rabbits in a warren. It is market morning and it has been raining in the night, and the people are now drying their enormous umbrellas in the sun. There are nearly a thousand people who have come in from the country round with provisions of all kinds, which are both cheap and plentiful. Their costume differs very little from what we see in other parts of France, though the flower-girls are more robust than those of the Marché St. Honoré, and the patois is less easy to understand than Parisian French. There is a certain statuesque grace about

the attitude of many of the women, which their simple costume, their bronzed complexions, and the white, or coloured, handkerchiefs which they wear round the head, render very picturesque; but the hardships of field life and exposure to the sun, give them a hard, aged appearance before they are twenty. Many of them have walked ten miles barefoot, to the market in the rain, and will return along a dusty road, to work again in the fields and to sleep in a hovel with cattle. The market seems almost entirely conducted by women, and there is a ceaseless clamour of voices up to a certain hour in the morning, when both market and market-women disappear.

It is pleasant to see the Toulousaines, with their fresh bright faces and white caps, going to church and to market, in the early morning, and a 'caution' to see the capacity of their baskets and the prices that they give for provisions in this favoured land. Our host, who, it is fair to say, is celebrated for keeping the best table in Toulouse, is purchasing baskets of fruit at what, were we to divulge the secret, would be considered fabulous prices; and which make one wonder that half the produce of Languedoc is not sent, in spite of the octroi, straight by train to 'Les Halles,' for the benefit of Parisians with short purses.

We spoke of the pretty women of Toulouse,

let a French writer describe them a little more minutely:—

'Les Toulousaines sont en général petites, et, quoiqu'elles aient les cheveux noirs, la blancheur de leur teint ne peut être surpassée. Dans leurs traits, le piquant s'unit à la grâce; la fraîcheur de leur visage, l'incarnat de leurs lèvres attestent la pureté du sang; des dents petites et perlées, des yeux superbes, presque toujours fendus en amande et voilés par de longues paupières, ajoutent à leurs agréments. A ces qualités extérieures, elles joignent une âme aimante et un caractère d'une pétulance singulière; elles sont franches, communicatives et gaies.'

And, we should add one more trait, which is too patent to leave unnoticed, but which we would rather the Abbé le Voisvenon would tell for us:—

'Ce peuple, le plus spirituel de la terre, a un tort immense à mes yeux: ils ne se lavent pas assez les mains.'

The great number of visitors that annually pass through Toulouse, is principally owing to its central position, and to its being on the highway to the Pyrenees; for the city itself, though large and important, with a population of upwards of 114,000, will not compare with Pau in interest or beauty of site. Its buildings are for the most part poor and built of brick, its streets are long, narrow, irregular, and very badly paved. There is one fine site in the

town, the 'Place du Capitole,' of which we have already spoken, spacious and central, and from which most of the principal thoroughfares diverge; and one distant view to be obtained, in clear weather, of the prominent peaks of the Pyrenees.

The churches of most interest are those of St. Sernin and St. Etienne. The illustration on the next page gives an accurate idea of the picturesque proportions of St. Sernin, with its beautiful octagonal tower with five tiers of arches, its semicircular east end, and its graceful porches. Its date is partly of the eleventh, and partly of the fourteenth, century, and although the largest church in Toulouse, it is built of brick. There is some curious wood carving in the interior; in the side chapels and crypt there are some remarkable relics, and a model showing the position of the church before the Revolution, when it was fortified, and surrounded with walls, like the church of the Templars we have seen at Luz. The size of the interior and the length of the nave, redeem it from insignificance, but so much has been added and altered since the time of building, that the interior and exterior of St. Sernin, have the appearance of being different and distinct edifices.

At the opposite side of the town, at the end of an open 'place,' but built up against by houses on each side, is the 'Cathédrale de Toulouse, St. Etienne,' of which we can get no favourable view,

ST. SERNIN.

or comprehend very clearly the designs of its various architects. There is a nave of the thirteenth century half-finished in the sixteenth, a clock tower of another

period and a choir ('flamboyant') of another. The tower is irregular in its sides, the rose window is not in the centre of the nave, and the choir does not appear to belong to the rest of the structure. The whole building is a confusion of styles, and a distinct example of none; but the interior (like that of St. Sernin) is imposing from its size and height, and in the choir there is some fine stained glass.

In both these churches we could not but notice the simple and quiet (not to say slovenly) manner in

which the services were conducted; the neglected state of many of the chapels, and the generally 'seedy' (if we may use the word) appearance of the interiors. We remember seeing a little bundle carried in on a cushion, which was a living child, and another bundle hurried out, which was dead—and we can just carry away in our memories the figures of a few men and women kneeling in the half light, and the monotony of the 'ora pro nobis,' but there was little gilding, or tinsel, or display, of any kind, and scarcely anything to remind us that we were in a land

'Where tapers burn all day for departed souls.'

Toulouse, the capital of the department of the Haute Garonne, situated in the centre of a thriving province, with its 'Canal du Midi,' and its river and railway communication, both with Marseilles and Bordeaux, is admirably placed for commerce, and the plains of Languedoc are sufficiently fruitful to supply its inhabitants cheaply and plentifully all through the year. It has little appearance of commercial activity or enterprise, but rather the aspect of a city that is content to live on its ancient reputation.[1] Many

[1] Its Post Office is a sleepy institution, and we fear corrupt; reminding us more than any other, of the dear old 'Correo' at Madrid, where travellers have to wait patiently day by day for letters that they know have arrived, and finally receive them with the addition of a little sand or cigar ash, that an official has dropped into them during his scrutiny.

TOULOUSE.

years ago the town and people of Toulouse were thus epigrammatically described:—

'Petites gens, petit commerce, rues étroites, esprits plus étroits que les rues, prétentions monumentales et résultats microscopiques, mélomanie suspecte, amour effréné des histrions, pratique du culte réligieux à la manière un peu idolatrique—voilà Toulouse.'

Its history dates back thirteen hundred years, its judicial rights and privileges are recorded through many centuries, and the statues of its worthies in the 'Salle des Illustrés,' in the Hôtel de Ville form an imposing array. In this gallery we are led through a series of historic recollections, we are reminded of the days of the Romans, and of the more romantic troubadours, and are brought by a chain of events more or less connected with our own countrymen and their brave deeds, to the peaceful, but not unimportant event, the construction of the Canal du Midi in the time of Louis XIV., by Riquet, an engineer.

This canal, which brought so much prosperity to Toulouse and to the inhabitants of the plains of Languedoc, is celebrated in local song, and the name of Riquet is held in grateful remembrance. It was a colossal undertaking, uniting the two seas of the Mediterranean and the Bay of Biscay, being 150 miles long, and constructed for barges of 100 tons burden.

The railway has almost superseded its use, but the peasantry still sing:—

Ce que toujours le monde admire, âge en âge,
Ce que le Languedoc contemple avec amour,
Et qui fait le bien-être à la ville au village :
C'est le canal de Riquetou.
Oui, grâces à Riquet, la cité de Toulouse
D'aucune autre n'est jalouse.

* * *

Riquet was not a native of Toulouse, but of that the poets take little heed, his statue is placed amongst the worthies in the Salle des Illustrés, and he is remembered by a grateful province.

We have left the most interesting building in Toulouse until the last. In a narrow street, called the Rue des Arts, in the cloisters of a desecrated church of the Augustines, there is an admirable collection of busts and casts from the antique, statues, marbles, and Roman remains. An idea of the general arrangement may be gathered from the next illustration, but the extent of it, and the almost numberless fragments of sculpture that have been collected together—especially from the valleys of the Pyrenees, and the banks of the Garonne—could hardly be imagined. It is considered the finest provincial collection in the South of Europe, from the variety and excellent preservation of the antiques, and from

CLOISTERS AT THE MUSÉE.

the careful manner in which they have been classified and arranged, to form 'an uninterrupted chain in the history of Art from the Gallo-Roman period to the Renaissance.'

It is impossible to walk round these cloisters, even in the most cursory manner, without being struck with the character portrayed in many of the busts, with the beauty of the friezes (the originals of many patterns now quite familiar in our modern schools of Art), and with the chaste but vigorous designs of the Roman sculptors. In such perfect preservation are some of the architectural remains, and so marked is the individuality of many of the busts, that we are brought face to face as it were with both the authors and their works, with, almost, the startling effect of a discovery at Pompeii.

We are permitted to examine this collection at leisure, to copy some of the friezes, and to sketch the courtyard in the centre, where through the Gothic arches, we can see the sun shining upon the tower of the desecrated church, and upon the trees in the courtyard which twine their branches round the marble pillars, and half hide the remains of statues and votive altars lying in the long grass. We stay until evening, and are finally swept out by the custodian, with the dust of ages, and a heap of little bits of sculptured stone, that the curators of the British Museum would not despise.

There is a gallery of modern paintings upstairs (the room in which they are hung being part of the interior of the church) that we are bound to see; but in the whole collection there are few pictures that one would care to possess, or which call for notice. They are for the most part inferior copies of the old masters, and some modern works chiefly by French provincial artists. There are enormous canvases covered with allegories, and religious subjects are also numerous; but if it be true that the Venetians surpassed in colour because they worshipped God, the French exhibit little sign of faith by this test. Eastern scenes are very popular; involving plenty of rich colouring and affording scope for dramatic effect. Thus we have 'Zara waiting for Muça' by the well in the cool courtyard; and, further on, more daughters of Mahomet revelling in Eastern luxury; a carpeted terrace overlooking moonlit scenery, Chinese lanterns, laughing eyes, wicked looks, and stern and scowling despots. One picture represents a disconsolate Peri at the gate of Eden—a fair and comely maiden standing with her hands crossed upon her breast, a rich Cashmere shawl encircling her waist, and a jewelled bracelet her arm—the conventional type of fair womanhood, but neither sorrowful, disconsolate, nor ethereal. The bracelet is wonderfully painted, the shawl looks as if it might be lifted off, and the 'door of Paradise' is a careful

tracing of a moresque doorway from the Alcazar at Seville. Altogether it is evident enough that (in spite of theories to the contrary) there is a growing tendency to materialism in the modern French school.

But we have perhaps detained the reader long enough at Toulouse, for we have failed to find (excepting in sculpture at the Musée) many great works either in art, architecture, science, or commerce; we depend upon its 'associations monumentales' for any abiding interest, and note in passing, that generally, both in the Pyrenees and in Spain, those objects which leave the most lasting impression on the mind are the relics of a former age and an alien nation—in the Pyrenees, those of the Romans, and in Spain, of the Moors.

Toulouse is in the centre of a district, so rich in architectural remains, and in towns of historic interest, that the traveller may well hesitate as to the direction he should take, when turning his steps homeward.

To the antiquary, to the archæologist, and to the artist, we should not hesitate to say, visit Carcassone, Narbonne, and Nismes, three cities which are perfect museums in themselves.

The ancient towers of Carcassone will perhaps commend themselves more to the artist, and the museum at Narbonne to the antiquary; but no traveller can visit Nismes without feeling amply repaid. The mere

mention of its chief attractions will be enough—the beautiful Corinthian 'Maison Carrée,' still in such delicate preservation, that it looks as if it ought to be covered with a house of glass; the ancient Amphitheatre (where a bull-fight was held in the autumn of 1866, and they killed a matador), and, eleven miles from the town, that noble monument of the Romans, the 'Pont du Gard,' that spans the valley with its three tiers of arches—an aqueduct 180 feet high and nearly 900 feet long.

There is another route from Toulouse to Paris (partly by railway, partly by diligence), which possesses the attraction of beautiful scenery, combined with the pleasure of getting off the beaten track, and which would enable us to see another French watering-place, and to pop upon one or two of our gouty friends,—viz., in a northerly direction, by Aurillac and Clermont to VICHY. We should stay a day or two, to see this celebrated little town with its Imperial châlets, damp and forlorn looking, and to admire the ingenuity with which a naturally flat and almost barren tract of land on the river Allier, has been turned into a pretty undulating shrubbery, garden, and public promenade, raised above the river; to see the quiet allées and the 'grilles' where there is scarcely a bather to be found by the end of August (whilst in the season the numbers may be judged of by the value of the linen and towels in daily use, which is

said to be about 6000*l.*), to see the really 'grand' and empty Hotels, where they record the fact of an Imperial visit, and give, in a style worthy of the immortal 'Jeames,' an account of how His Majesty takes his bath:—

'L'Empereur, pendant son séjour à Vichy, prend son bain chaque matin à neuf heures, à l'Etablissement thermal, où il se rend accompagné d'un aide de camp.

'La salle de bain est de la plus grande simplicité. A gauche, en entrant, est un lit de repos orné de rideaux à raies grises et brunes en grivats de Vichy, et recouvert d'une courtepointe de même couleur. A droite est une toilette avec une glace, devant laquelle Sa Majesté se fait la barbe; au fond est la baignoire, sur laquelle est peinte une N couronnée. Plus loin est une salle de douches descendantes, avec une humble escabeau de bois.

'En sortant du bain, sa Majesté Impériale déjeûne d'une tasse de chocolat et d'un petit pain, puis Elle se retire en faisant un tour dans le parc, distant de cinq minutes au plus de la résidence impériale.'

And, notwithstanding the fact recorded in the papers that since the departure of the Emperor, Vichy has subsided into 'le plus grand calme;' and that the 'personnel du Casino lui-même se trouve maintenant réduit à sa plus simple expression,'—we may well pay a visit in the evening to the Salon of the

Casino, where the Vaudevilles, whose days are numbered, are acted so well, so easily and naturally, that the three or four persons who occupy the foremost chairs, and form the only audience at this time of year, feel (when the curtain draws up, and two young people are discovered in confidential conversation), as if they were intruding on some private interview and are half inclined to withdraw—and so on to Paris the next day, by an easy railway journey of seven or eight hours.

TARBES.

There are one or two drawbacks to this route, which ought to be mentioned—viz., the frequency of floods, the uncertain state of the roads, and the difficulty of obtaining information about the

diligences over the mountains. In 1866 many travellers were detained or had to retrace their steps, owing to the overflow of the Allier, which had risen seventeen feet between Clermont-Ferrand and Issoire, and had washed away the line of railway.

But we are now going to retrace our steps a little, taking the route by Bagnères de Bigorre and Tarbes; passing through a beautiful district of undulating hills, tinted with the pale yellow gorse, covered with pink heath and ferns in all stages of colour, and dotted with flocks of sheep; passing villages — and *villageois*, dirty and poor-looking in the midst of a harvest of plenty, the women scantily clothed, ragged, and unkempt, but living in too fruitful a land to starve; up hills so steep that oxen have to be yoked to the diligence to draw it, and afterwards along dreary and mo-

BAYONNE.

notonous roads, with their two lines of poplar trees that give no shade, so flat and straight that they vanish over the horses' heads into the shape of a needle-point at the horizon of plain—and so once more to the still deserted town of Pau.

Thence by railway, through Orthez again, to Bayonne, by the banks of the broad river Adour, losing altogether, in our rapid flight, the view of the old city and its fortifications that used to be obtained from the road, as we descended the hills at the last few miles, when we caught occasional glimpses of the sea and the distant mountains reaching far into Spain.

Fortunate were we, then, if we were in time to see the sunset, before rumbling through the busy old town of Bayonne—

'Une ville gaie, originale et demi Espagnole'—

with its old gables and fortifications, and streets narrow enough to remind one of Laurence Sterne's wish that they might be a trifle wider, if only to be able to say on which side we are walking,—and so on to Biarritz, to take a last glimpse of the world of fashion disporting itself by the sea.

CHAPTER XII.

BIARRITZ—ST. JEAN DE LUZ—CONCLUSION.

THERE is a great stir and bustle in the town of Bayonne, for everybody is bent upon leaving it, and every carriage and vehicle worthy of the name has its occupant. There are thirty or forty diligences and omnibuses loading in front of the Hôtel du Commerce, and in every part of the town we find the same movement seaward. The Emperor has just passed through on his way to Biarritz, and the iron-clad fleet is hourly expected off the coast; and in spite of the late storms and still threatening aspect of the sky, every road that leads in the direction of the sea is thronged

with a line of vehicles, and with the Basque peasantry on foot.

Biarritz, always gay and lively, and crowded with visitors in the season, was especially so in the autumn of 1866, when it was no easy matter to get accommodation. All the hotels and lodging-houses near the sea were occupied, and many travellers had to return at night to sleep at Bayonne. Perhaps they did well, if in search of repose, for in these overcrowded little wooden buildings, towards the end of the season, the multitude of 'pensionnaires' extracted a murmur even from the oldest and most hardened travellers. There was no resisting the enemy, and nothing for it but flight. There was literally no end to them, as a poet says—

> 'The little fleas had other fleas, and lesser fleas to bite 'em,
> Those smaller fleas had lesser fleas, and so ad infinitum.'

The distance from Bayonne to Biarritz is about five miles, the greater part of the way being along a straight flat road lined with trees. A few minutes before we reach Biarritz, we pass on our right hand the private chapel of the Empress, and the gates leading to the Villa Eugénie, to the latter of which a large box is attached with the words 'BOÎTE AUX PETITIONS,' inscribed in prominent letters. The Villa itself we can see through the shrubbery, a plain substantial building close to the shore, as shown in the

next illustration, but bare and bleak-looking, exposed on every side to the wind, although the shrubs and trees that were planted round it have grown up during the last two or three years, and give it an appearance of shelter on the land side. It is the least picturesque and the bleakest spot in Biarritz,

and almost the only one, whence no good view of the Spanish mountains (just indicated in a sketch at the head of this chapter) can be obtained.

The town consists of a number of irregularly built white houses, several large hotels, and a casino. The chief streets are full of shops with Paris wares and Spanish wools. The promenades and walks by the sea and on the rocks, literally swarm with people; amongst whom the fine tall figures, and handsome faces of the Basque peasantry, are conspicuous.

We who have seen so much gaiety of costume in the Pyrenees, will not be so much struck with the

brilliant assemblage of visitors of all nations, amongst whom the Empress walks about in the afternoon almost unattended; but we shall admire the beauty of the coast-line, the bold headlands and rocks where the sea has undermined it in places, leaving caverns and natural bridges in the cliff when the tide is out.

From the rocks and promontories we obtain beautiful views of the mountains stretching far away into

Spain and losing themselves in the sea; and when the tide rises on stormy days, we get the best idea of this dangerous iron-bound coast, and can understand why there is no shipping in sight, and no harbour worthy of the name. There are curious nooks and crannies

in the rocks, where the French have 'utilised' the caverns worn by the sea, and built cafés and a 'Parc aux huitres,' the oysters being brought there by railway from the north of France. They have also built a Casino on the shore—a long white building facing the sea, where in the evenings and in wet weather visitors assemble.

In this Casino there were the usual suite of rooms for reading, 'conversation,' billiard-playing, &c., and the 'Salon,' where they listen to the band; but the real business of the place was conducted in a little room upstairs, the 'Salon de Jeu'—an apartment rather difficult to find, and only approached by a door in the corner of a courtyard. The room itself was small and poorly appointed, and it was not attractive for a mere spectator; but there was a business-like air about this quiet corner of the Casino which indicated very plainly that the interest in écarté was absorbing enough, and that France manages by hook, or by crook (or by croupier), to enjoy the pleasures of 'le jeu,' undisturbed. We could comprehend better after paying a visit to the 'corner,' why the 'Salon de Société' was so dull, and why the reading-room (well supplied with newspapers), was generally empty.

There were balls and concerts nearly every evening for the select and wealthy part of the community; and a travelling circus and other amusements, for the crowds that lingered about Biarritz until late into the night.

Many of these autumn days were stormy and wet, but the fine ones were generally spent on the beach

or in the sea; bathing being the next excitement in importance, to waiting about to see the Emperor, or expecting the iron-clad fleet.

The Port Vieux is the principal bathing-place—a deep bay, with smooth sloping sands and high rocks on either side, which serve as a protection from the force of the waves, and keep the water tolerably smooth for swimmers. There is an 'Etablissement,' a sort of wooden châlet forming three sides of a square, fitted up for bathers, with galleries and seats for spectators, and a café and a band, attached. These sands are the great rendezvous for visitors at Biarritz, and the great sight of the town at the hours of bathing; but there are also many favourable positions on the rocks above for watching the evolutions of the bathers, without joining the throng of people on the sands.

The French system of bathing 'en famille' is well known, and it differs little here from what we may

see at Trouville or Etretât, only that the 'costumes de bain' are more varied and eccentric, and the toilettes of the Spanish and French spectators are if possible more gay.

Let us join the crowd seated working and chatting on the beach, and note one or two characteristic figures. A tall object soon emerges from one of the doors of the 'Etablissement' and walks slowly down, and as he passes we recognise a grave and somewhat portly gentleman, who sat near us at the table d'hôte at the 'Maison Rouge'; but he is transformed into an acrobat, and his dignity has forsaken him. He resembles so exactly one of our street mountebanks, that we should not be surprised to see him spread a carpet on the sands and stand on his head. He stays for some time to chat with his family, who accompany him to the beach to see him make his first plunge, and who will afterwards join him in the water. Presently he walks into the sea, and clambering on to a rock, shrieks out something which we cannot catch the sense of, but which suffices to draw general attention to his movements, and, springing into the air, turns a somersault deftly, and 'flops' into the water, like a great round ball. The children shriek with delight, and run off to the châlets to put on bathing-dresses. They soon return, the miniatures of their parent, and, having gourds fixed to their shoulders, they are put into the sea, and left to float about by

themselves. The bay is soon filled with moving objects, of all shapes and sizes—dark shiny creatures crawling up the rocks, and others darting about in every direction—and resembles nothing so much as a gigantic aquarium.

But the gaiety of the party on the sand where the band is playing, and every chair is occupied to witness this singular *Bal de Mer*, is the most attractive part of the show. Here is a group of four gentlemen who have just come down, surrounded by ladies, laughing, shouting, and talking at the top of their voices. Their costume has evidently been studied for effect, and it is but fair to say that they succeed in creating a sensation. One of the four especially, clad in a suit of green, resembled that quaint grasshopper-like figure that was lately imported to London from the *Théâtre du Châtelet* at Paris—Comête, the Bohemian dancer. Like Comête, his legs were delightful, and would have been a fortune to him on the stage; and the air with which he paced the sands before making the first plunge, would have been invaluable in melodrama. The others were nearly as eccentric in appearance; and altogether, we can think of no human creatures with which to compare them (especially when all four join hands and rush into the water pell-mell), than that brilliant company of Bohemians.

We have scarcely noticed the ladies, who—having had a pail of fresh water poured over their heads as

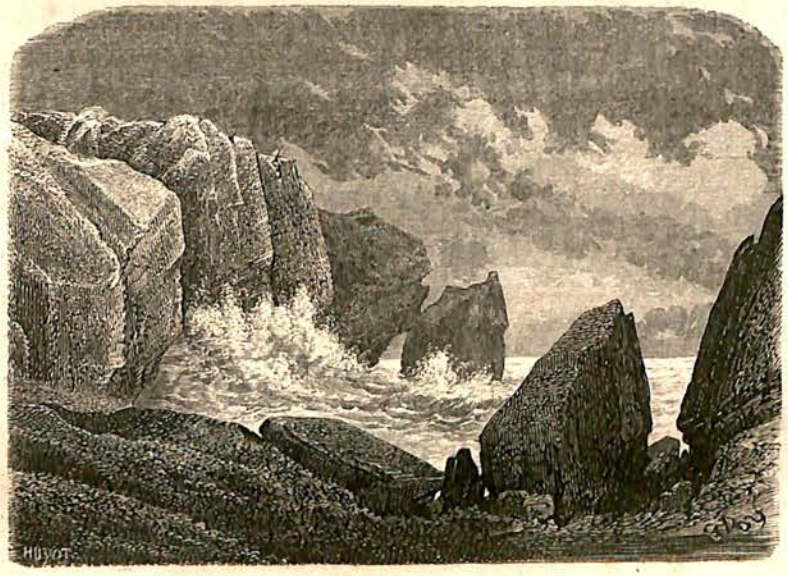
they stand on the beach in the most scanty description of 'bloomer' costume—are being towed out to sea by their husbands, or by the bathing-attendants; nor have we said anything of the number and skill of the swimmers. We will now go to the 'Côte des Foux,' near the Maison Rouge, where the bathers are more numerous, less select, not quite so particular about their costume, and a little more robust in their frolics.

In this more exposed part of the bay of Biarritz, the great Atlantic waves come in with a long unbroken sweep, and with a strength and weight which we can understand, by the distant booming sound against the rocks that guard the Port Vieux. It is no easy task for even a good swimmer to hold his own against the long sweep of one of these waves, which steals treacherously in, with scarcely a ripple on its surface until within a few feet of the shore, when it curls over in a mass of foam that makes it difficult to rise to, dragging the swimmer down as if in the clutches of the devil-fish in Victor Hugo's 'Toilers of the Sea.'[1]

But let us look at the company. There are several hundred bathers of both sexes in dark 'costumes de bain,' some creeping down the sands, five or six perhaps hand-in-hand, some racing, some turning somersaults; a grand levée of heads in the water, fifty

[1] Many a stout swimmer has been nearly carried out to sea by the treacherous strength of the under-current, or backwater, at Biarritz.

or more romping together in one large circle; others dripping and shivering on the shore, a number of male attendants to dip the timid or the weak, and a crowd of spectators on the sands. We have no fear of Mrs. Grundy's disapproval when we say that we joined the throng on the beach, for in truth the costumes of the bathers were often more 'comme il faut' than those on the shore, but we were curious to discover why so large a crowd had collected at this spot. We were not kept long in suspense; it was to see 'a wave come in.'



The storms of the previous days had greatly subsided; the sea was now comparatively smooth, and

the sky clear overhead, but there remained a ground-swell, the like of which we had never witnessed before. Not very far out to sea we could distinguish, what first appeared to be a dark shadow on the water extending for some distance, which as it came nearer was evidently a long stretching wave coming ashore. We who are on the beach hear it striking the rocks and masonry of the breakwater, and can tell by the sudden rising of the water in that direction, that it must have filled the little bay at the Port Vieux, and put to flight all the fashionable côterie on the chairs in the Cave of Canute; it had done this, and perhaps more—it may have fatally injured a few morning toilettes, but here, the consequences are more ludicrous if less disastrous.

There are about fifty people now in the water, sixty or seventy feet from us, some swimming, some dipping, some being dipped, the majority standing up to their shoulders in the sea, when the wave comes down upon them. The bathing men call out as usual for all to jump, or rise to it, but this time it is too high for them, and altogether too powerful and sudden. It breaks just over their heads with a fall of water of several feet, like innumerable cascades; engulphs the struggling, helpless mass of human beings in its foam, takes them up in its arms, and with a long sweep, or slide we should call it, runs them up the beach, and leaves them struggling in a confused

heap upon the shore far away from the sea, breathless and bewildered, but more frightened than hurt. The spectators rush to the rescue, and crowd round the heap to pick out their friends, forming a picture on the sands that we will not attempt to describe. We will only compare it to a common event on the sea-shore, when a fisherman empties his nets, and the people collect round him to divide the spoil. The simile may be uncomplimentary but it is not far-fetched, for in such straits, and in such costumes there is little difference in the aspect of human creatures and little fishes.

One stormy day before we left, the four great 'war ministers'—the *Magenta*, the *Heroine*, the *Flandre*, and the *Magnanime*—hove in sight, and lay at anchor at a careful distance from this dangerous shore, rolling gently on the subsiding waves. The Emperor and Empress went on board in the afternoon, and in the evening there was an attempt at an illumination of the vessels with the electric light, and much firing from the ships.

The crowds that visited Biarritz that day, and thronged the rocks and the beach, and every conceivable spot, were of themselves the most interesting part of the scene, for Biarritz has seldom had such a gathering on her shores. At night the wind rose again, and the Admiral, who had come on land to dine with the Emperor, had considerable difficulty in

getting back to his ship. The sea broke heavily all that night, and before we awoke in the morning the squadron had wisely put out to sea, and half the people seemed to have quitted Biarritz.

This stormy weather lasted for several days, but was at last succeeded by one of those delightful balmy days peculiar to the South of France, when the 'light wind played upon the land and upon the sea,' when all nature was in harmony, and everything living seemed to rejoice.

On such a day we charter a little basket-carriage, to take our last drive, to visit the neighbouring smuggling village of St. Jean de Luz. We keep near the sea nearly all the way, obtaining fresh views of the Spanish coast, and of the rocks which guard the shore: enjoying the soft air which breathes across the bay, where

> 'The tides of grass break into foam of flowers,
> And the wind's feet shine along the sea.'

We find this little town, that has been making desperate attempts during the last few years to vie with Biarritz, now almost deserted, hotels closing, the casino on its last legs, the fishermen returning to their occupations, and mending their sails on the sea-shore. We account for the flitting of the gay population, partly from the recent bad weather, and partly from the statement in a Biarritz newspaper, that—

'Tous les baigneurs qui reviennent de Saint Jean

de Luz déclarent que ce pays n'offre aucune distraction. De tous côtés l'on fait des plaintes contre le Casino. La musique est mauvaise et le service très-mal fait.'

The attractions of St. Jean de Luz, fortunately for us, are natural, and do not depend upon the Casino or 'la musique,' and we can well spend the remainder of the day upon the sea-shore. The storms that

break upon this exposed coast with such fearful violence that more than a hundred houses have been undermined or destroyed, and which was severe only yesterday, is succeeded by a calm that nothing can exceed in beauty as evening approaches.

Before we leave St. Jean de Luz the sea of sapphire and beryl that has been lying smooth and still for the last two hours under a deep-blue cloudless sky,

changes to a darker tone; scarce a ripple comes into the bay, or breath of wind over the wide waters; only one little fishing-boat, with her graceful drooping sail (casting a faint shadow as she crosses the sun), drops into the silvery bay—silvery now from the moon's rays cast upon the shore.

At Biarritz, and St. Jean de Luz, we take leave of our friends, some returning to England, some going to Mentone, and some to Spain. The conversation, as usual at Biarritz, had often turned upon the practicability of making an expedition into the interior of a country, of which attractive glimpses are obtained from the 'Ports' of the Pyrenees. The majority of travellers content themselves with a visit to St. Sebastian, which we need hardly say is worse than nothing; because it gives little insight into the character of the country or people, and extorts from many who return, a solemn vow never to go a step further into Spain.

There is a halo of mystery and romance, still clinging to the Peninsula, that many would not care to dispel; but for those who are anxious to see the land of Don Quixote, and to become acquainted with the people, there is nothing that need deter them. Notwithstanding the testimony of the 'lamentable Miss Eyre,' it is quite possible for ladies to travel on the high roads unattended.

We have lately met two English ladies who made the tour of the north of Spain without escort, and without experiencing any of those annoyances or mishaps of which the public has heard so much. For the benefit of future travellers, it is worth while to state what they did. Entering Spain by Irun and St. Sebastian, they went to Burgos by railway and thence to Madrid. They visited the Escorial and Toledo, Saragossa and Barcelona, and returned to the Pyrenees by Perpignan and Toulouse. Travelling always in the compartment reserved for *Señoras* on railways, keeping rigidly to the high roads, and stopping only at large towns, they found it, for the most part, 'plain-sailing,' and thoroughly enjoyed the journey. Without knowing anything of the Spanish language, they did what any two ladies might do again, with perfect propriety and safety—accomplish, unattended, one of the most interesting tours in Europe. They said it was 'very expensive,' but that they did not seem to mind. Their great secret was, that they were well provided for the journey both positively and negatively; they travelled with plenty of money, without prejudice, and without a dog.

A word in conclusion. If it be thought that, in the preceding pages, we have not given sufficient illustrations of costume, or said enough about the people, the answer is, that in truth there is very little

that is pretty or characteristic to be met with all through the French Pyrenees. Nothing is more curious, when looking back upon scenes visited, over and over again, than to find how very slight an impression the inhabitants and their doings have made upon the mind, and how very seldom we have come into contact with the people.[1] It is not because the bent of M. Doré's genius has led him to endow the rocks and trees with an almost human interest, that we have in sympathy thought more of these, but because, after spending months in the mountains, of the people we find very little to record.

In landscape-painting, where figures have to be introduced, the artist will find (as in the Val d'Ossau) nothing more suitable or characteristic than the field women in their white capulets; and at a distance it matters little that their picturesqueness is the result rather of tatters than of taste. A step higher in the social scale, and nearly everything like distinctive costume vanishes, and our interest in it at the same ratio. But if the natives will doff their pretty head-dresses, and take to Lyons bonnets and Manchester cottons, the visitors, as we have often explained, help to make up for the deficiency by the fancifulness of

[1] If we were asked what were the 'relations' between the French visitors and the native population of the Pyrenees, we should answer that they were very like near relations in general, and saw as little as possible of each other.

their attire; and of all modern head-dresses, none are more effective or becoming than the bright woollen 'nothings' that only a Basque peasant woman knows how to make, and only a Frenchwoman knows how to wear.

We have alluded already to the comparatively small number of English people who have yet visited the Pyrenees, but as we have perhaps more American than English readers, we may repeat a question in another form and ask 'How it comes to pass' that—when the American people think it worth while to pay a visit to Europe, almost exclusively to see Switzerland and Italy; when, in 1866, 21,000 Americans visited Rome, and only 7000 English—so few should think it worth while to see the Pyrenees? It is certainly the only civilised country we have visited, without finding Americans there before us. Is it accident or caprice, or part of a system of leaving it to the last, which 'last,' never comes? The feast is provided—where are the guests? The French Pyrenees form one of the loveliest gardens in Europe, and a perfect place for a summer holiday—'la beauté ici est sereine et le plaisir est pur.'

POSTSCRIPT.

The Expenses of a tour in the Pyrenees slightly exceed those of a similar journey to Switzerland, on account of the greater distance traversed from Paris.

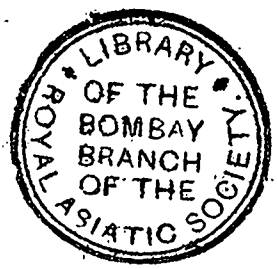
Hotel and travelling expenses are rather dear in July, and cheap in October; the latter being the finest month in the year for the mountains. There are slow diligences on all the high roads, at the usual low fares. Carriages are expensive for two people, but very reasonable for a party of four or five.

A tour of one month costs each person from Paris, on the average, 40l.; and one of two months, 60l. The journey may be easily accomplished for less, but it will probably cost more in the height of the season.

The French guide book ('Itinéraire des Pyrenees,' Hachette, Paris) gives very full information about routes, &c. The maps and panoramic views of the mountains are especially useful.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET,
AND CHARING CROSS.



Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 02 July, 2018